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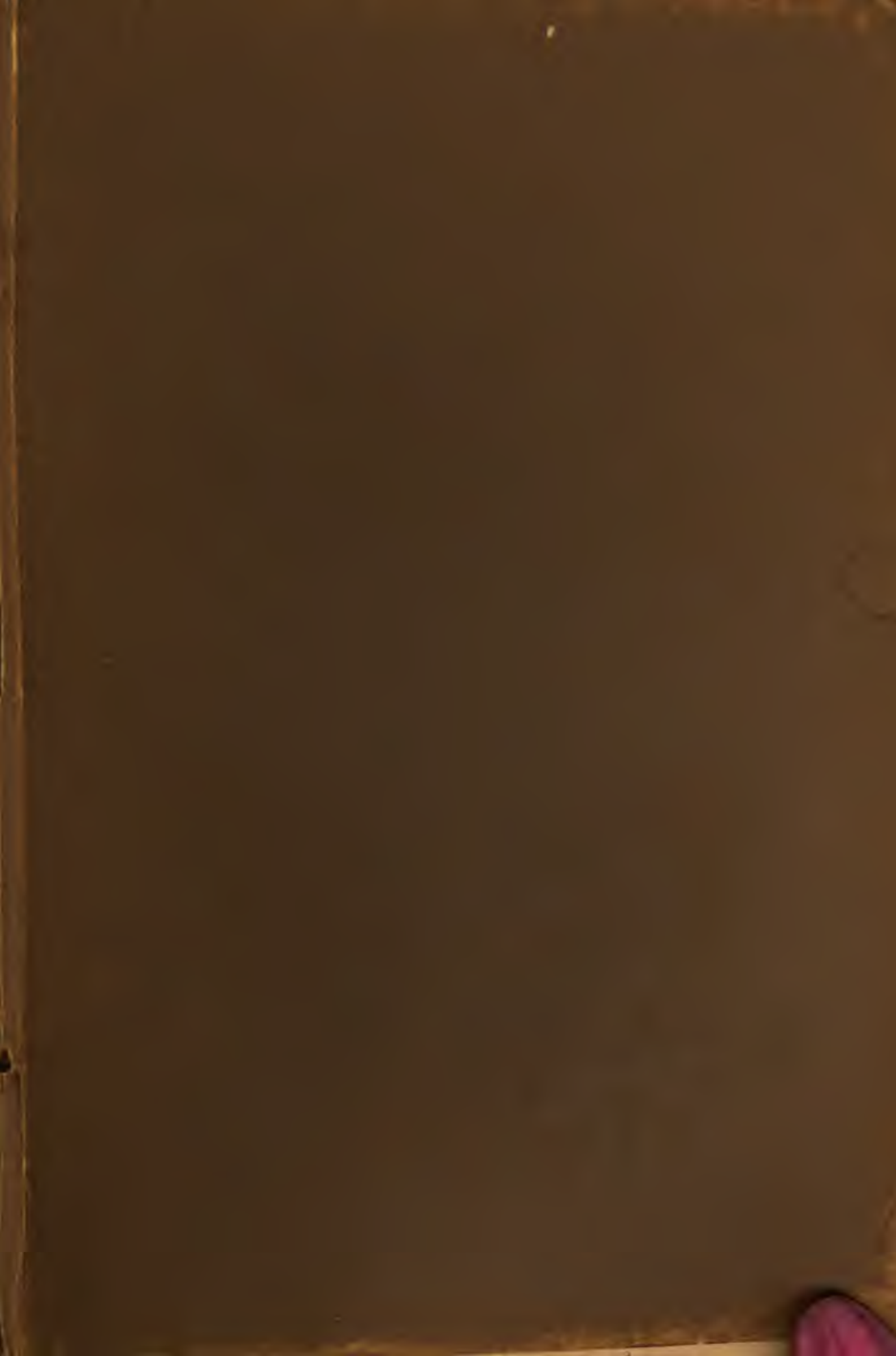


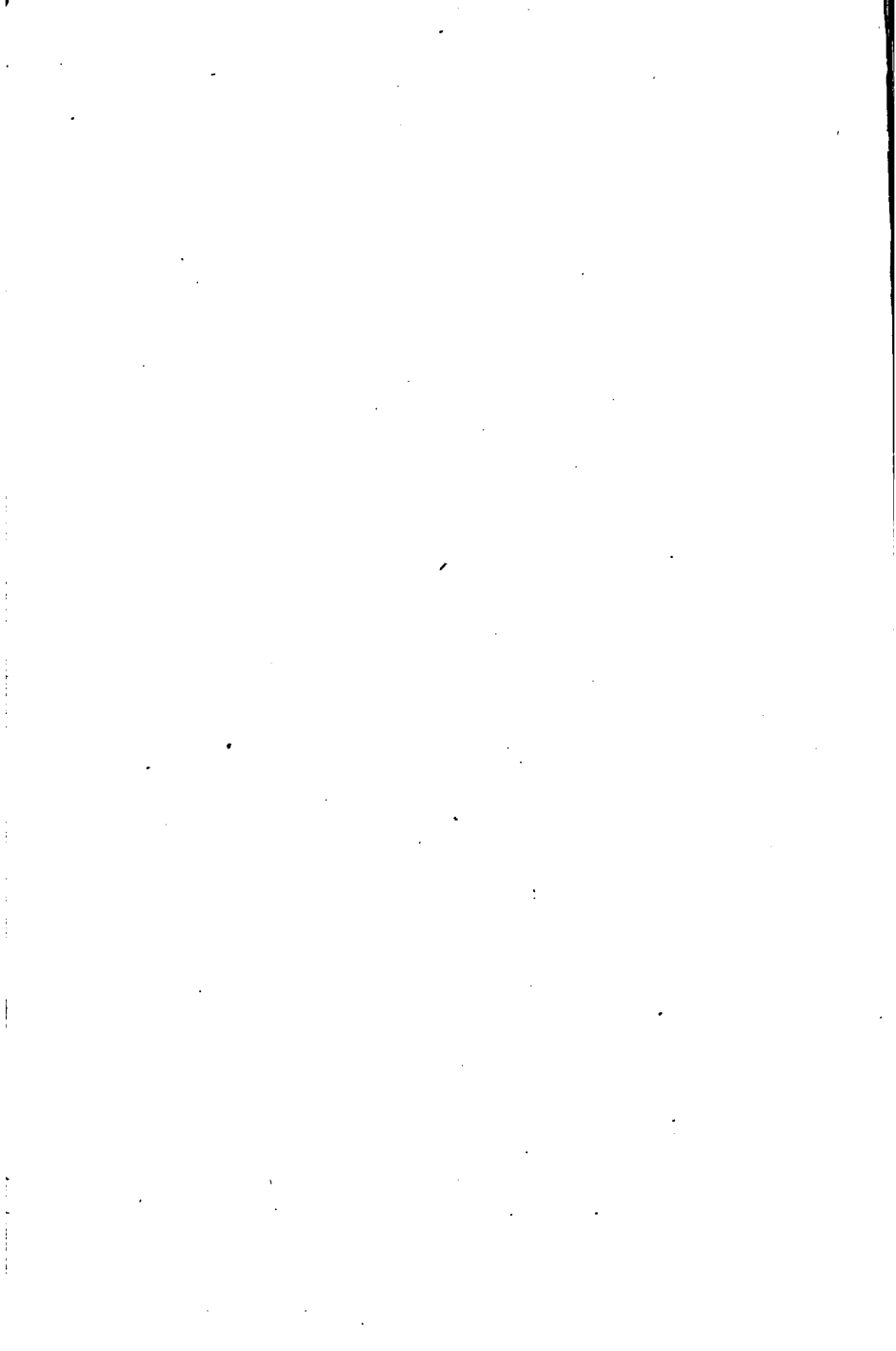
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VISION OF



REATION.





T.

Professor Agassiz,

with the best remembrances

of the Author.

Ames 1871

A VISION OF CREATION.



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A VISION OF CREATION.

A Poem.

BY

CUTHBERT COLLINGWOOD,

M.A. AND B.M. OXON., F.L.S., ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, GEOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL.

“NUNQUAM ALIUD NATURA, ALIUD SAPIENTIA DICIT.”

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YE ALL, WHOSE KINDLY VOICES TO ME BRING
SERENITY TO MEET LIFE'S ILLS AND WARS,—
LIKE THE SOFT PEACEFUL LUTES, WHICH SEEM TO SING,
LOW AND DISTINCT AND SWEET, IN EACH BRIEF PAUSE
OF AN IMPASSIONED SYMPHONY,—RECEIVE
THIS HOMAGE FROM THE FOUNTAIN AND THE GROVE :
AND YE, WHOSE VANISHED FORMS BUT GENTLY HEAVE
THE QUIET CHURCHYARD TURF, YET WHOSE BLEST LOVE
HAS BEAUTIFIED MY LIFE,—YE, WHO BUT SLEEP
AS FLOWERS SLUMBER IN THE UNOPENED BUD,
AND WHOSE SWEET INFLUENCES BATHE THE DEEP
RECESSES OF MY HEART WITH GENIAL FLOOD ;—
THIS MONUMENT,—ALIKE TO FRIENDS WHO WAIT,
AND CHERISHED MEMORIES,—I DEDICATE.



PREFACE,

THE following Poem it is hoped will appeal equally to the student of the Bible and to the man of science, whether he be a Bible-student or otherwise;—for its avowed object is to place the story of the Creation, as told in the Bible, before the reader in a pictorial form and in a vivid light; while the Geologist will bear me out that I have in no particular overstepped or distorted the ascertained facts of his science. I have strictly followed the brief and simple account of the first chapter of Genesis, and have endeavoured to shew how each particular therein announced agrees with the recognized facts and sequences of modern Geology.

In the Introductory Essay the reader will find the subject worked out in a prosaic and scientific form; and it may be hoped that the poetical dress of the main work will not the less tend to give the theory acceptance, either

with unscientific Bible-students, or with scientific men of all creeds. The quotation from Hugh Miller first attracted my attention after I had commenced the work, but it offered me a strong inducement and stimulus to prosecute what I had already begun.

It need hardly be added that theological polemics form no part of the plan I had proposed to myself; and therefore the Fall of Man and the Origin of Evil,—or indeed even the story of Adam and Eve,—are not included in the subject of my Argument. That narrative has doubtless a spiritual signification—just as some claim for the first chapter of Genesis, (whether rightly or wrongly, I will not here express any opinion,) an underlying symbolism.

C. C.

Christmas, 1871.

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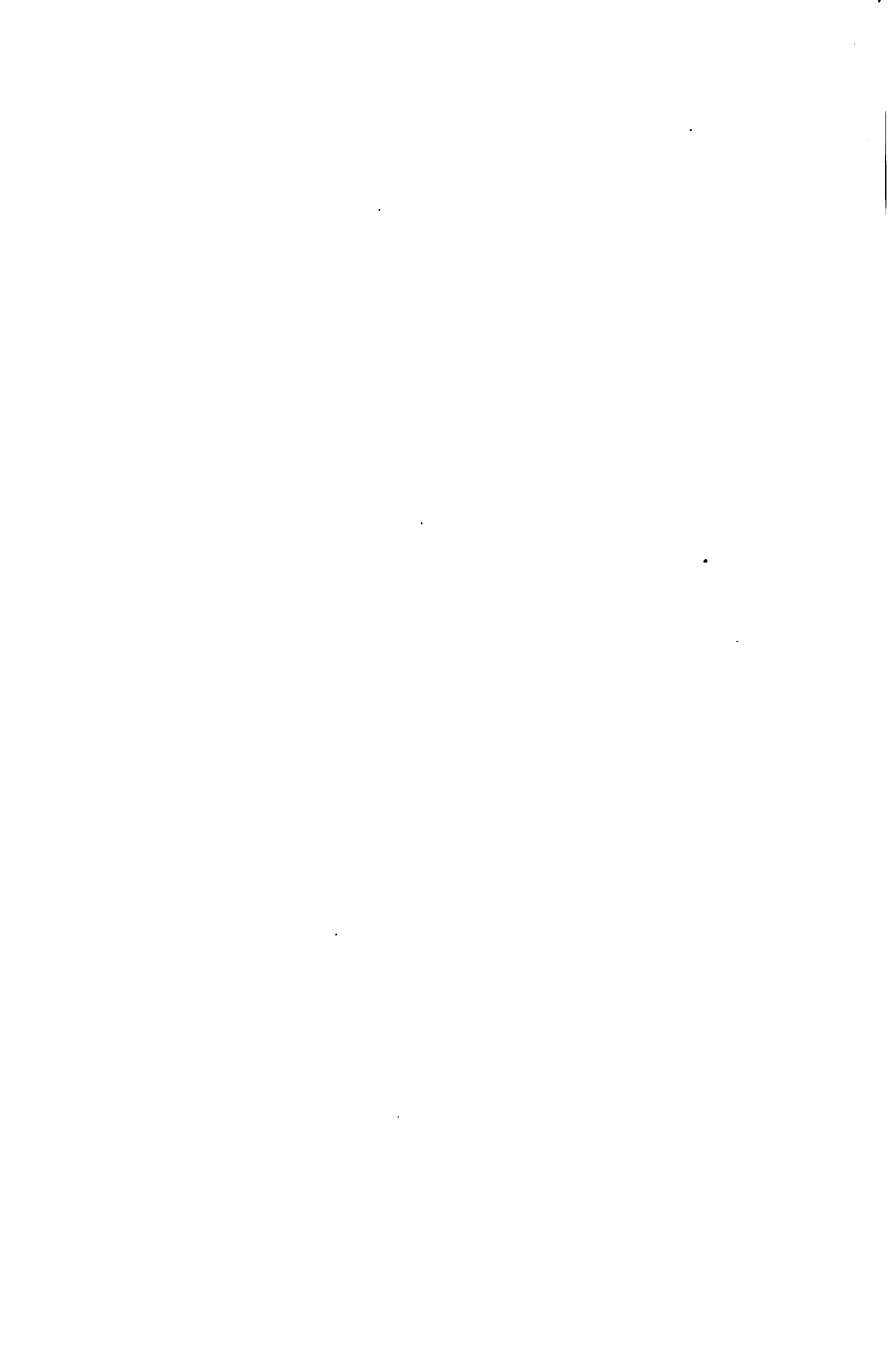
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INTRODUCTION.

THE ANCIENT RECORD OF CREATION VIEWED AS CORROBORATIVE OF THE MODERN DOCTRINES OF GEOLOGY.

GREAT pains have been taken by earnest men, and numerous books have been written, with the endeavour to prove that, although the discoveries of modern Geology seem at first sight greatly at variance with the simple account of the Creation detailed in the first chapter of Genesis, yet points of analogy may be discovered between the two records which save the Mosaic account from condemnation, and maintain the character of the Bible as a Revelation from above. For it became more and more evident that the main facts revealed by a careful and intelligent examination of the Earth's crust prove incontestably, that the World was neither made nor peopled in six days; and that a vastly longer period than six thousand years must have elapsed since the creative fiat went forth:—and therefore, that, if one of the two records must fall to the ground, it could by no means be the record of Geology.

Religious persons, and all by whom the Bible is revered and valued, naturally felt that if such were the case,—if the truths of Geology were so incontrovertible, they would aim a deadly blow against Scripture;

unless an exegesis should be discovered which should place the one fairly in *rapport* with the other. Hence the numberless, and too often futile, attempts to *reconcile* Scripture and Geology,—attempts which, unfortunately, in too many instances, resulted in serious injury to the cause they were intended to serve,—either by the introduction of wild and baseless speculations upon imagined hidden meanings of the text, or by childish attacks upon the Geologists by men who were ignorant of the first principles of the science, and utterly incapable of appreciating the mode by which the geological observer had arrived at his well-founded generalizations.

But, so far from endeavouring to force an unwilling or imperfect reconciliation between the Mosaic and the Geological record, not only have we for many years past been convinced that the most perfect harmony exists, but we are prepared to go much further, and to aver that the more we have considered the subject, the more profoundly are we astonished that a Record, which forms an introduction to the oldest book in the world, should be found, when properly regarded, to contain a brief and forcible, yet comprehensive *résumé* of the great leading facts disclosed to the Geologist in these recent times,—wanting neither in correctness of sequence, nor in accuracy of detail. We would say, indeed, that we can conceive of no stronger proof of the authenticity of the Bible as an inspired Book, than that the first chapter, confessedly as old at least as the most ancient writing extant, should contain a plain statement of those great leading cosmical and terrestrial facts which have been slowly arrived at as

the result of the corrections and additions made to human knowledge from the earliest ages to the present day ;—a statement which will not suffer by the closest critical or scientific scrutiny. We insist thus strongly upon it, because, if it is, as we believe it to be, a fact that such is the case, too great stress cannot be laid upon its importance,—not only as an anchor to the theologian and Bible-student, but as a confirmation and corroboration of the speculations and inductions of modern Science.

Not a few good and earnest men still look with suspicion upon the progress of Science, because they erroneously imagine that it clashes with the revelations of the Bible. The unscientific Christian is intolerant of the Geologist and “progressive” Naturalist, because he cannot find warrant for their theories in his Bible ;—while the free-thinking man of science is too often equally ready to put the Bible in the cold shade, because he cannot there see confirmation of his views of nature. And thus there has sprung up an antagonism between Revealed Religion and modern Science, which is much to be regretted,—and which is too often a war between persons rather than a disagreement of things,—and Truth is lost in the fray.

Every step therefore towards a better understanding and more comprehensive knowledge of the mutual bearings of Science and Religion, should be hailed with satisfaction by both parties, and should tend to lessen the hostile feeling with which each is too apt to be regarded by the other. And there can be no more important step in this direction than the clearing up, not only in the minds of a few, (who are doubtless already convinced,) but in the

general scientific and religious mind, of that first great difficulty, which has so long remained a stumbling-block to both,—viz, the Mosaic account of the Creation.

In the following statement of that account we have implicitly followed the Bible text and sequence of facts,—only enlarging upon it somewhat, to give it such geological significance and accuracy as shall make it easily recognizable by anyone acquainted with the main facts of modern science. And here let it be distinctly borne in mind, that this first account to which we allude, coherent and complete in itself, is contained in the 34 verses which commence at the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, and end at the conclusion of the third verse of the second chapter. *After* this, in the second chapter, follows a partial recapitulation, varying in details, and containing the narrative of the creation of Adam and Eve;—a story to which no reference is made in the first account; and to which it is therefore entirely out of our province to make any further allusion in this place.

There is of course no occasion to enter into any discussion of the numerous methods of reconciliation,—all of them most imperfect and most unsatisfactory,—which have from time to time been proposed by eminent Biblical writers on the one hand, and by Geologists on the other, but we shall refer only to that one which at once commends itself to our judgment as the simplest mode of explanation, and which yet fulfils all the requirements of the case. In other words, we shall adopt the idea of a *vision*, or rather a series of visions, brought before the spiritual or mental eyes of the Seer, who has described in

terse and unvarnished language what he thus witnessed. This view, we believe, was first imperfectly developed by Dr. Knapp, in his *Lectures on Christian Theology*,—who there says:—"If we would form a clear and distinct notion of the whole description of the Creation, we must conceive of *six separate pictures*, in which this great work is represented in each successive stage of its progress towards completion." But having made this valuable suggestion, he stops short; and in the amplification of his theory he is not a whit more successful than his predecessors. In America, Professor Moses Stuart, an anti-geologist, enunciated a similar theory, but advanced no further. In Germany, Eichorn appears to have thrown out the same idea; but it was Dr. Kurtz of Dorpat, a Professor, be it remarked, of *Theology*, who was, among continental writers, the chief exponent of this view. In Great Britain, Hugh Miller is well known as its advocate and illustrator; and his chapter on this subject in the *Testimony of the Rocks* (Lecture 4) contains an able and eloquent exposition of it;—an exposition whose only fault is, that he has, in our opinion, to a certain extent obscured the subject by insisting, somewhat unnecessarily, that only three of the six visions relate to geological subjects, and "that there are only three periods (therefore) to be accounted for by the Geologist."

It must be remarked for the satisfaction of a certain class of writers, that we are fully aware that this view of the subject has met with strong objections from some candid authors, whose motives at least deserve the greatest respect. We entirely agree with Mr. Rorison

("the *Creative Week*," in Replies to Essays and Reviews), that "there is no attaining a satisfactory view of the mutual relations of Science and Scripture, till men make up their minds to do no violence to either, and to deal faithfully with both." But we regret that both he and Dr. McCaul, (in "*Aids to Faith*,") while they are neither of them more successful than their predecessors in the reconciliation, speak of the "*vision*" *scheme*' with a certain air of disdain. "If it is a vision," says Dr. McCaul, "it cannot be historic truth;"—but at the same time no one will now venture to assert that the six days were *natural* days, and yet it is claimed as historical truth. "To suppose," he says again, "a moral, or even ceremonial command, based upon a poetic picture or vision, or an ideal narration, would be absurd" (p. 198). Nevertheless, Mr. Rorison, writing with the same aim, says, "And thus the days themselves are transfigured from registers of time into definitives of strophes or stanzas—lamps and landmarks of a creative sequence—a mystic drapery—a parabolic setting—shadowing by the *sacred cycle of seven* the truths of an ordered progress, a foreknown finality, an achieved perfection, and a divine repose," p. 336. "God's work," he says, "is *mystical*." "Allow for the *mystic* significance of the number seven, and all perplexities vanish," p. 355.

Now we do not wish to impugn the symbolism of the number *seven*, but we would urge that in the present case we are seeking for something *besides* symbolism. We are seeking to shew that Science may fearlessly continue her discoveries without any danger of becoming a stumbling-

block to its votaries,—because this chapter, which to some persons seems to come in conflict with those discoveries, when properly read, we contend to be, on the other hand, confirmatory of them. We do not profess to read every *phrase* of Scripture (as some would) by the test of Science, but in the present instance, we believe that such a succinct and connected narrative as this cosmogony affords would not have been given solely to convey symbolic and spiritual truths.

We therefore do not ourselves see that the perplexities so entirely vanish when the mysticism of the number *seven* is thus brought out, nor should we suppose that Dr. McCaul would expect moral or ceremonial commands to be founded only upon a *mystic number*, (unless it also shadowed forth some underlying natural truth), any more than upon a *poetic picture*—especially when that poetic picture was, as we believe, a true transcript, as it were, of completed operations. But it has always appeared to us that theologians, when writing on this subject, regard it too much from one single point of view, and neglect Mr. Rorison's canon, to “deal faithfully with both” Scripture *and* Science.

There are, moreover, in the best expositions, certain points which have been omitted, or not sufficiently dwelt upon; partly owing to their not having presented themselves in so strong a light as they appear to us to have demanded; and partly because the progress and development of geological science have since given them greater importance and significance.

The great advantage which can be claimed for the idea

that the narrator of the first chapter of Genesis is describing a series of visions, which were optically presented to him, is, that while it does no violence* to the strict interpretation of the text, it fulfils, on the other hand, the requirements of Geology almost to the letter; and therefore is in all respects entitled to the position of a theory of great probability, which may stand as a truth, on which to build a superstructure; just as the undulatory theory of Light, though not absolutely proven, so stands, and is thus universally used and respected in optical science.

One of the great strongholds of those who have claimed to believe in the literal Creation of the world in six days has been the expression used at the conclusion of each day's work—"And the evening and the morning were the first day," &c. Literally, it stands thus:—"And there was evening (*root*, to be black, or dark) and there was morning, day one" (day second, &c.). Now it has always appeared to us that, if the narrator had referred to an ordinary and natural day, he would have said, "And the *morning* and the *evening* were the first day." And it is, to say the least, a strange way of describing a day, six times successively, as though the evening came first, and was succeeded by the morning;—and although we believe it is not an unusual Eastern form of speech, Dr. McCaul

* The objections which are brought against the interpretation and internal evidence of the text admitting the idea of a vision, appear to be of so infinitesimal a nature, that we cannot help believing, that if the chapter had been headed, "The Vision of Moses the Son of Amram," (or whoever the Seer might have been,—probably *before* Moses,) those difficulties would soon vanish or assume their own proper and minute proportions.

himself admits that "this mode of reckoning, unique in the Bible, and peculiar to the first chapter of Genesis, suggests that the days are peculiar too." p. 215 (*Aids to Faith*). But if we accept the theory of a series of visions or pictures, it is not difficult to understand the peculiar phraseology. The earliest described state of the earth is specially characterized by darkness,—a darkness which would have come over the Seer like night,—and the succeeding upspringing of light would be like the dawning of the morning; and thus the evening and the morning would be the first day. After that, it is only necessary to suppose a period of darkness intervening between each of the other visions, in order to give to each of them at once impressiveness and individuality, and to fix them more deeply upon the memory of the Seer,—and the evening of preparatory darkness, followed by the restoration of light, would be the second, third, or fourth day.

Let us now draw a brief sketch of the history of the globe as revealed by Geology, using the Bible account as a running commentary, and thus placing the two records in juxtaposition, as mutual glosses. The scriptural statement commences even earlier than the geological, for we are told, "In the beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth." Here is a definite statement, and an ultimate one,—complete and perfect in itself. We are not informed *how* God created the universe; but, for ourselves, we can see no reason why He should not have employed for this end, if He saw fit, the condensation of a previously-formed nebulous mass, (the "happy scientific guess" of Laplace, as it was termed by the late Radcliffe

Observer,) as well as any other method that might present itself to our imagination. We have no sympathy whatever with those Materialists who can so control their reasoning powers as to believe, or profess to believe, that any step in the formation of the Universe arose from a fortuitous concourse of atoms ;—nor with such as would hint that the development of Life on the globe was due to any secondary causes *alone*. Man cannot create the lowest form of life, and to suppose that *matter* can form the *highest*, appears to us an *argumentum ad absurdissimum*, if we may be allowed such an expression. However far we may go back in the region of speculation, we must stop short of a First Cause ; and if our argument be correct, that we have in this chapter a true and perfectly consistent account of the Creation, we have also its authority for the belief which our own Reason dictates to us,—that GOD *created the Universe*.

The second stage of Creation is described in the 2nd and 3rd verses ; and from them we undoubtedly learn that the earth was not at once created complete in all its parts,—for at a period subsequent to the primary creative fiat, we are told that the earth was wasteness, (desert, desolateness,) and voidness (emptiness), and darkness was upon the face of the *deep* (*root*, to be put in motion). Professor Moses Stuart, at all events an excellent philologist, remarks on this passage—“If now there are any words in the Hebrew language which are capable of expressing a state completely waste and void, desolate as to any production, ornament, &c., the words (thō'-hû and vā-vō'-hû) are the very ones. It was impossible that

Moses should have described more strongly the chaotic and desolate state that followed the original Creation."

We have here then the Earth first presented in an advanced state of condensation,—a crust already formed,—thin and unstable indeed,—whose burning surface was covered with the condensed waters which had fallen from an enveloping atmosphere, so thick and steaming as to exclude the faintest ray of light;—upon which surface they foamed and boiled as over a vast furnace. No life could exist under these conditions,—the period was truly *Azoic*; and the fundamental igneous rocks alone were, up to this period, produced. The literal Scripture account describes it as "a desolate globe, whose surface was void of life, and of everything save water, with which it was universally covered, and enveloped in gross darkness."

In all the succeeding verses, a gradual improvement in the physical conditions is indicated; and analogy would lead us to infer, independently of the pregnant introduction, which serves as

"prologue to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme,"—

that even previously to the first appearance of light, gradual improvement had been taking place,—evolving order and arrangement out of confusion and chaos.

For the waste and void earth was not left to chance;—"the Spirit of God was hovering (or incubating) over the face of the waters,"—directing (that is) the fulfilment of those divine laws which were ultimately to result in order and beauty. And may we not legitimately infer that the same brooding Spirit would breathe into the first organism

the breath of life, which otherwise could never have been imparted by any combination of warring, or of peaceful, elements.

Thus much for the introductory verses, which numerous commentators, quite independently of geology, (as, for example, Bishops Patrick and Horsley,) have understood as referring to an indefinite space of time before the creation of light.

Let us now briefly describe the work of the six demi-urgic days.

1st day. Since "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," it was absolutely necessary that this obscurity should be dispelled ;—not suddenly, or completely at once, —but by the onward progress of things. The Earth, we may suppose, kept pace in its formation with the other bodies of the solar system, (with which alone the Genetic account of the Creation has to do ;) and though the Sun was attaining, or had attained, its luminous power, its rays could not penetrate the thick vaporous mantle with which the face of the deep was covered,—nor could these mists be removed so suddenly, as at this period to disclose the Sun as his own messenger of light. Milton's conception is sufficiently accurate ;—

"for as yet the Sun
Was not : she in a cloudy tabernacle
Sojourn'd the while."

But as these mists and clouds slowly and gradually dissipated, they permitted the first gleam of light, like a northern dawn, faintly to illuminate the surface of the globe. It was not till after the Carboniferous period, when the

Primary epoch was passing away in the Permian era, or the Secondary commencing in the Trias, that the atmosphere became so cleared as to disclose the two great lights,—and that the stars, whose history we are not told, first shone down placidly upon a regenerated Earth.

The early appearance of Light, however, was a gradual phenomenon,—but one which could not fail to be striking to an observer who had so lately been impressed with the Egyptian darkness which covered the face of the waters in the first scene.

“And God saw that it was good;”—not so much the good of abstract light, (in the fulness of which God dwells;) as that, having penetrated, after so long an epoch, to the very surface of the Earth, it could henceforth play its important part in bringing about those changes, which not only were retarded by its absence, but which absolutely could not be effected without its influence. For, as yet, *nothing living* had made its appearance, or could, in the absence of light, exist upon the earth. It had been a period of struggle of the physical forces only; when fire and water were yet in dire conflict for the mastery—and the seething ocean rested upon a precarious and ever-changing crust, which became, in this age of commencing light, converted into the underlying metamorphic series of rocks, to which geologists have given the name of Laurentian and Cambrian. But it may be noted as highly probable, that the first glimmering of light was the signal for the calling into existence of organic beings,—doubtless extremely simple at first, but which constituted the dawn of life upon the globe,—beings, of which the *Eōzoön Cama-*

dense of the Laurentian rocks in Canada and the green Connemara marble in Ireland, may be regarded as the type.

Be it remarked however, that inasmuch as this light of the first period was no special creation, independently of the Sun, but arising from its source, it was no less subject to periodical absences than it is now; so that the very first sickly ray which penetrated the dense atmosphere would result in the natural division of the day from the night.

2nd day. But this subdued appearance of light could exhibit itself while there was still considerable crassness of the vaporous envelope, at a time when cloud and sea were still indistinguishable, and while there was yet no marked interval between the heavens and the water-covered earth. For no radical change in this respect had yet taken place. But just as, in the progress of things, light had gradually penetrated through the diminishing steamy mists and attenuated vapours which enshrouded the earth, so would these by degrees lift themselves off the surface, like a voluminous curtain, and find their equilibrium in the atmosphere at an increasing distance therefrom; so that a period would at length arrive when there would be a definite expanse, or *firmament*, separating the waters of the ocean from the ever-condensing and falling waters of the still densely-clouded sky.

And this was the vision of the second day. Little recked the observer of the commencing Algæ, or of the Lycopods which decked the insignificant Silurian archipelagos;—of the Trilobites and Brachiopods, the Crinoids, the Pterygoti and Eurypteri of the vast, though shallow Silurian seas. These, although brought to light by the

geologist, would constitute no feature of the inspired picture ; which would present the grand and impressive characters of the scene, with all the force of novelty, but could not include small details, which however important in the scientific view, would fail to have been comprehended had they been seen, or even described. And as the first glimmering of Light on the tormented Earth was good, so was the separation of sea and sky, and the introduction of a life-sustaining firmament, good also ;—for such an intervening atmosphere marked the progress which the earth was making, and its advance towards that time when terrestrial vegetation should clothe its face with luxuriant profusion, and ponderous land-animals should draw breath from its never-failing source.

3rd day. But long ere this canopy of clouds entirely gave way before the beams of the yet unseen sun, the waste of waters had given place to numerous conspicuous islands and low-lying lands. Beds of mud, the necessary result of the constant pouring of heated waters upon the granitic effusions of the earliest solidified crust, formed a substratum, in the midst of which were erupted plutonic rocks, which peered above the sea level. The coral-polyps of the hot Silurian ocean had been busily rearing those piles of carboniferous limestone which underlie the coal ; and the hitherto shallow waters found deeper resting-places in the bed of ocean ;—so that at length an epoch had arrived when the comparatively large extent of dry land became a characteristic feature ; and opportunity was thus afforded for the growth of a luxuriant vegetation. The few islets of the Devonian sea had been covered with

Asterophyllites and Mosses,—but now, graceful Tree-ferns, gigantic Equiseta and Lycopods,—strange Lepidodendra and Lomatophloyos,—wonderful Sigillariæ, Coniferæ and Cycadaceæ,—and tall Palm-like trees (Palmacites), clothed the land in fantastic and prodigal abundance; while under their shade flourished innumerable smaller ferns, grasses, rushes, and other herbaceous plants, for the most part Cryptogamous or Endogenous; forming altogether an exuberant vegetation, never since equalled in tropical forests. This imposing and extraordinary foliage, unrelieved as yet by any animal life of importance, could not fail to strike the observer with wonder;—and though there were in the sea countless zoophytes and mollusks,—many crinoids and crustaceans,—not a few formidable mailed (ganoid) fishes, and probably some reptiles, (as Archegosaurus,)—yet would they form no part of the carboniferous landscape. Now indeed the earth was even yet preparing for Man—and the vast forests of this *age of vegetation* were busily extracting from the sunless, dense, and heated atmosphere, the material which should hereafter serve for the comfort of mankind, and advance the civilization of the future human race. Good, indeed, was this dry land, wrested from the long dominion of the Trilobite, the Pterichthys, and the Cephalaspis, to be hereafter the dwelling-place of reasoning beings:—and good was the forest-clad earth, never again to be buried beneath the waters, but for the purpose of uplifting once more its exhumed stores of coal, to subserve to the physical wants of a yet far distant human population.

4th day. As yet, however, the direct rays of the sun

had never shone upon the face of the earth. The thick clouds, which had rested so long like a canopy of ever-decreasing density, at length, however, broke,—and for the first time, dimly appeared the form of the great luminary, whose diffused brightness had so long subserved the processes of vegetation. Henceforth he was to be the monarch of the heavens,—to rise in radiance every morning in the East, and to set in glory every evening in the West; and with his unveiling passed away the *Primary* Geological epoch, the infancy of Creation, and the *Secondary* epoch was ushered in under the bright auspices of the sun, moon, and stars.

But this was not all:—the hitherto uniform temperature of the cloud-canopied globe began now to give place to climatic variations; and the solar orb was henceforth not only to separate the light from the darkness, the day from the night, as on the first day, but was to perform a more extended function,—to regulate and apportion the periods of summer and winter,—to be for signs, and for *seasons*, and for days, and for *years*.

The Triassic period, which appears to answer to the fourth day's work, is, for some reason or other, singularly poor in organic remains. The long reign of the *Ammonites* begins,—turtles make their appearance,—shark-like fishes multiply,—mollusca and echinoderms swarm,—the vegetation differs in no striking degree from that of the Carboniferous age, except that it is greatly less luxuriant; and, with the exception of the introduction of a few large amphibious reptiles, there does not appear to have been any great change on the surface of the globe, or in the

character of its denizens, such as would strike an observer to whom the Triassic landscape was presented as a passing picture. Undoubtedly there was nothing noticeable which could compare with the spectacle, now first introduced, of the sun in his glory,—of the moon in her brightness,—and of the host of stars in their placid beauty. True, the Seer could hardly have been witness of all three orders of the heavenly bodies at one and the same time, nor is it necessary for the truth of the Genetic account that he should have been;—but it is quite possible that the sun and moon may have been simultaneously visible. And the fact that the stars are parenthetically dismissed in two words, (*v'ēth hakkōkāvīm, and the stars*), would seem to indicate this fact, and to point out that the creation of the stellar universe was a matter revealed otherwise than by sight,—a matter immense in itself, but not coming within the scheme of the system of the earth. It was a diurnal, not a nocturnal, picture which represented the phase of Creation characterized as the fourth day's work. And God saw that it was good.

5th day. But although the Triassic period is not remarkable for many animal remains of importance in connection with this subject, (although a few large reptiles appeared,)—or which could be regarded as comparable, in the elements of a picture, to the first unveiling of the two great luminaries on the fourth day; the succeeding period, known as Jurassic, and embracing the two great formations of Lias and Oölite, is among the most striking for the abundance of great marine reptiles and fishes, more especially of the former. Indeed it well deserves the

name of the *great age of reptiles*; and although great ganoid fishes (as *Lepidotus gigas*), existed, they were altogether eclipsed by the immense Ichthyosauri and Plesiosauri,—“sea monsters” of strange abnormal forms, which the quarries of Lyme Regis yield in such abundance. For God had said “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life”—“and He created the great *sea monsters*,” (ēth hattannīnīm)—not *whales*, as usually interpreted (verse 21)—“and every living thing that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly.” Fearful carnivorous creatures were they, and in great profusion;—nor roamed they alone through these seas; but with them were great Crocodiles, and Teleosaurs, 30 feet long, and many more imperfectly-known saurians, which must have met in many a sanguinary conflict, and rendered this epoch dire and terrible.

And immediately following these, came into being “every winged *fowl* (root, *oph*,—to fly) after his kind.” Now in this reptilian age, great dragon-like creatures (Pterodactyls and Ramphorhynchi) like gigantic Bats, raised their ungainly bodies into the air; and contemporary with the latter, in the upper Oölite, was the true feathered Archæopteryx, whose remains were recently discovered in the lithographic slate of Solenhofen. It had been imagined that the footprints found in the sandstone of Connecticut, of an earlier era, had been those of birds—but more and more doubt has been thrown upon them, and they are now generally believed to have been produced by reptilian animals. That some reptiles flew (imperfectly) in the air, there can be no doubt,—and that

the earliest discovered bird is entombed in the upper Oölite, in which the remains of *Ramphorhynchus* are also found, is no less certain. But we fully believe that in the text, *true birds* are meant, not only from analogy, but because in the expression, *every fowl of wing*, the root of the word *wing* signifies to *cover* or *protect* (as feathers do)—and the structure of the feathered wings and tail of *Archæopteryx*, so delicately preserved, leaves no doubt upon this point. And as nothing is more certain than that Birds succeeded Reptiles in their appearance on the globe, the overlying chalk must, in the nature of things, have seen numerous descendants of the true feathered race of which we have the earliest indication in *Archæopteryx*.

In this verse, however, is the one sole apparent discrepancy; which will nevertheless appear to most persons as of very slight importance; but I am bound to give it fair prominence. It consists in the fact that in verse 20, "The living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth,"—and "every winged fowl," are placed together in the same category, as it were;—and without a pause between them. Nor, after the creation of "great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind," (verse 21), does the usual expression follow:—"And God saw that it was good." Nevertheless the important fact remains, and is borne out by this account, that aquatic Reptiles preceded Birds in their appearance on the globe.

6th day. But now the creative scheme hurries to its climax. The close of the Secondary epoch with the Creaceous period, introduced vast *terrestrial reptiles*, as the

Megalosaurus and Iguanodon, upon the scene ; but it was reserved for the Tertiary formations to be trodden by the great beasts of the earth. "And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind." In the *Secondary* epoch none but a few marsupials appear to have imperfectly represented the Mammalian class, but the Tertiary period was inaugurated by a host of pachyderms,—Palæotheria, Anoplotheria, Xiphodons, and Water-hogs,—while beasts of prey were soon to appear (Hyænodons) to make havoc among these peaceful communities. But if we regard the *Meiocene* as typical of the Tertiary period, we shall find in addition to these, colossal *Deinotheria*, and ponderous *Mastodons*, *Rhinoceri*, and *Toxodons*,—enough to people the plains and forests,—even though we were thus constrained to dispense with the *Megatheria*, *Sivatheria* and *Mammoths* of the later *Pleiocene* and *Pleistocene* ages. Vast herds of these animals tramped over the Tertiary plains ; and numberless smaller Mammals and Reptiles, representing "every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth," found their place in the rapidly increasing terrestrial population of the globe. So that when Man at length came, to be the head of Creation, all things were completed, and his empire was fully and multitudinously peopled.

And last of all, Man himself appeared upon the scene. And if there is any one fact more thoroughly established than another by the researches of the geologist and archaist, it is that Man is the youngest-born of earth's inhabitants,—the crown and keystone of Creation. The Tertiary epoch had passed away, and the Quaternary, or

most recent period, arrived, ere Man found his place,—a being of yesterday in the history of the World,—but boasting of great antiquity as measured by the changing aspect of animated Nature. Cœval with creatures whose bones alone remain to tell us of a race of extinct Elephants and Rhinoceri, Hippopotami and Bears, which once roamed in regions now under the dominion of the plough and harrow, in our very midst ;—nevertheless is Man the last Creation, and his advent fitly marks the close of the Creative record. “And God created Man in His own image,—in the image of God created He him ;—male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ; and have dominion.” And so it is to this day.

I think every one must perceive that the first three verses of the second chapter of Genesis have been separated from the first chapter—and really belong to it. In them the account is concluded, and the unity of the narrative demands their addition. “And on the seventh day (it had no evening and morning, be it observed, for it is not yet completed) God ended His work which He had made : And He *rested* on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.” The creation was complete, and its history brought up to the present period, and existing state of things. Therefore “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” ;—for had He not seen everything He had made, and behold it was *very good* ? Had He not formed a beautiful world, clothed it with noble vegetation, peopled it with multitudinous forms of

animal life, capable of receiving enjoyment thereon, and set over them *Man*, made in his own image and likeness? The completion of such a work might well be celebrated by a blessing and sanctification. And that He had spent countless ages in its preparation, and expended upon it the mighty resources of His infinite mind—evolved order out of chaos, and beauty out of deformity—impressed upon the Universe eternal and immutable laws,—only enhances the grandeur of the scheme far above the mere ideal ephemeron of a six days' work. His noble patience, wherewith He waited myriads of eöns for the completion of what He might, had He so willed it, have produced by a word, gives us a humble insight into His infinite purposes,—and strikes us dumb with the consciousness of our own littleness and feebleness,—as very dust before Him.

But although the perfect accordance of the Mosaic account with the most advanced Geological doctrines and discoveries has been thus clearly shown, we shall, in conclusion, point out that that account is in reality much more comprehensive than it is commonly understood to be. If we carefully analyze the first chapter of Genesis, we shall find that although only six days of work, and one of rest, are recorded, no less than twelve great periods are distinctly referred to, each of them (with one exception) marked in so explicit a manner in the text, as to give ground for the belief that they represent as many epochs. And these subdivisions, be it observed, accord no less closely with the known structure of the earth, than do the broader divisions into six days' work.

Tabulated, these twelve periods stand thus :—

1. The beginning, (of which Geology can tell nothing ;
and the Nebular Hypothesis broadly suggests
the *modus operandi*).
2. Azoic (fundamental igneous rocks).
3. Metamorphic (Laurentian).
4. Primary (Lower Silurian).
5. „ (Devonian).
6. „ (Carboniferous).
7. Secondary (Trias).
8. „ Jurassic (Lias and Oölite).
9. „ (Cretaceous).
10. Tertiary (Meiocene or Pleiocene).
11. Quaternary (Human period).
12. The existing order of things.

Let us take each of these Genetic periods in order, and see what they may be fairly considered to represent.

1. “*In the beginning*—God created the Heaven and the Earth.” (Verse 1.)

Here is the definite reference to a First Cause ; and however far we may go back, it can only represent the fact that the earth had a Divine beginning in the remote recesses of unrecorded Time.

2. “And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” (Verse 2.)

Here is represented an advanced condition of that condensation which the Earth appears undoubtedly to have undergone,—a thin and unstable crust of *fundamental igneous rocks* ;—a truly *Azoic* stage of creation.

3. *1st day*. "And God said, Let there be Light." (Verse 3.)

Here we have the condition for the first dawn of life, as well as of light ; which Geology, no less than analogy, tells us, represents the metamorphic rocks, known as the Laurentian and Cambrian series.

4. *2nd day*. "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." (Verse 6.)

Here we have a stage corresponding to the commencement of the Primary epoch, and answering to the Silurian period, perhaps the Lower Silurian, when very few rocks showed above the surface of the shallow universal Ocean.

5. *3rd day*. "Let the waters under the Heaven be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." (Verse 9.)

The presence of terrestrial vegetation in the Devonian formations proves that some dry land existed at that period. Lycopods, mosses, and certain plants called Asterophyllites, characterize the Old Red Sandstone, but no forest trees existed ; and their absence seems to indicate that the Devonian period takes an intermediate place in the record, as it does stratigraphically, between the last described era, and that which formed the remainder of this day's work.

6. *3rd day* (continued). "Let the Earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit." (Verse 11.)

The next period, (the Carboniferous), was emphatically the

age of vegetation. Lichens, Fungi, gigantic Equisetaceæ, arborescent and other Ferns,—Club-mosses, Lepidodendra, Conifers, Cycads, Palmacites,—rushes, grasses, heaths,—Composite, Leguminous, Umbelliferous, and other plants, characterized the Flora of this period, which has never since been equalled in the history of the globe.

7. *4th day.* "Let there be lights in the firmament of the Heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years." (Verse 14.)

The Triassic, or new Red Sandstone age, the beginning of the Secondary epoch,—a period intermediate between the age of plants, and that of reptiles.

8. *5th day.* "Let the waters bring forth abundantly." "And God created the *sea monsters*." (hattanînîrîm) (Verses 20, 21.)

The Jurassic age, consisting of Lias and Oölite,—emphatically the age of marine and fluviatile reptiles;—when the ocean seems to have swarmed with Ichthyosauri, Plesiosauri, Teleosaurs, and other monsters; and the rivers with Crocodiles, Turtles, &c.

9. *5th day* (continued). Literally "And fowl let fly upon the face of the expanse of the heaven." (Verse 21.)

This is the only period in the six days' work which is not separated from the preceding period in the Genetic text by the words, "And God saw that it was good." Nevertheless it appears to possess the value of a distinct era,—and just as the *cattle* and *man* were the distinct features of one day's work, so the *sea monsters* (reptiles) and *birds* were those of another. If this view is correct,

it would represent the next series, or the Cretaceous; the first certainty of Birds occurring in the Upper Öolite;—so that in the Cretaceous age they must probably have been numerous. .

10. *6th day.* Let the Earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, and cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the Earth.” (Verse 24.)

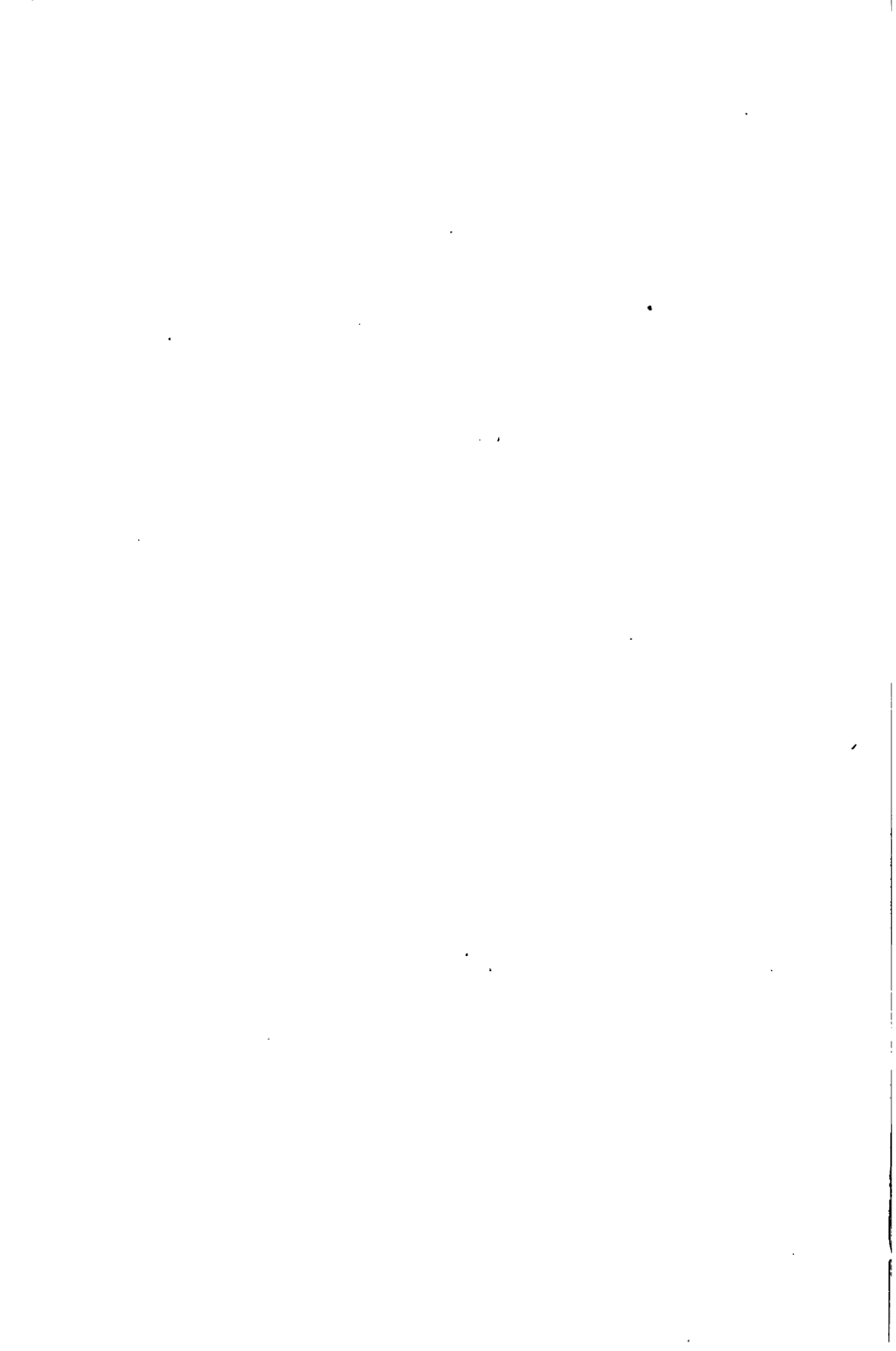
Mammals had no place of importance in the Secondary epoch, which closed with the Cretaceous period;—but the Tertiary epoch was just as markedly an age of great terrestrial beasts, as the Lias was of marine reptiles,—or the Carboniferous, of plants. Great pachyderms, as Palæotheria and Anoplotheria in the Eocene, culminated in the Mastodons and Dinotheria, &c. in the Miocene:—and vast herds of these huge creatures must have shaken the Earth of the Middle Tertiary period with their ponderous tread.

11. *6th day (continued).* “And God said, Let us make Man in our image, after our likeness.” (Verse 26.)

The Quaternary epoch, representing the most recent deposits, and now commonly called the *Human period*.

12. *7th day.* “And on the seventh day, God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made.” (Chap. II., verse 2.)

The *present order of things* is here represented, when the Earth being no longer in a state of preparation, and Creation being complete, Man is working out the designs of His Maker, who has created and preserved all things on earth subservient to his well-being and progress.



A VISION OF CREATION.

“Such a description of the Creative vision of Moses, as the one given by Milton of that vision of the Future which he represents as conjured up before Adam by the Archangel, would be rather a task for the scientific Poet, than for the mere practical Geologist, or sober Theologian.”

HUGH MILLER.—“*Testimony of the Rocks*,”
Edition of 1862, p. 170.

A VISION OF CREATION.

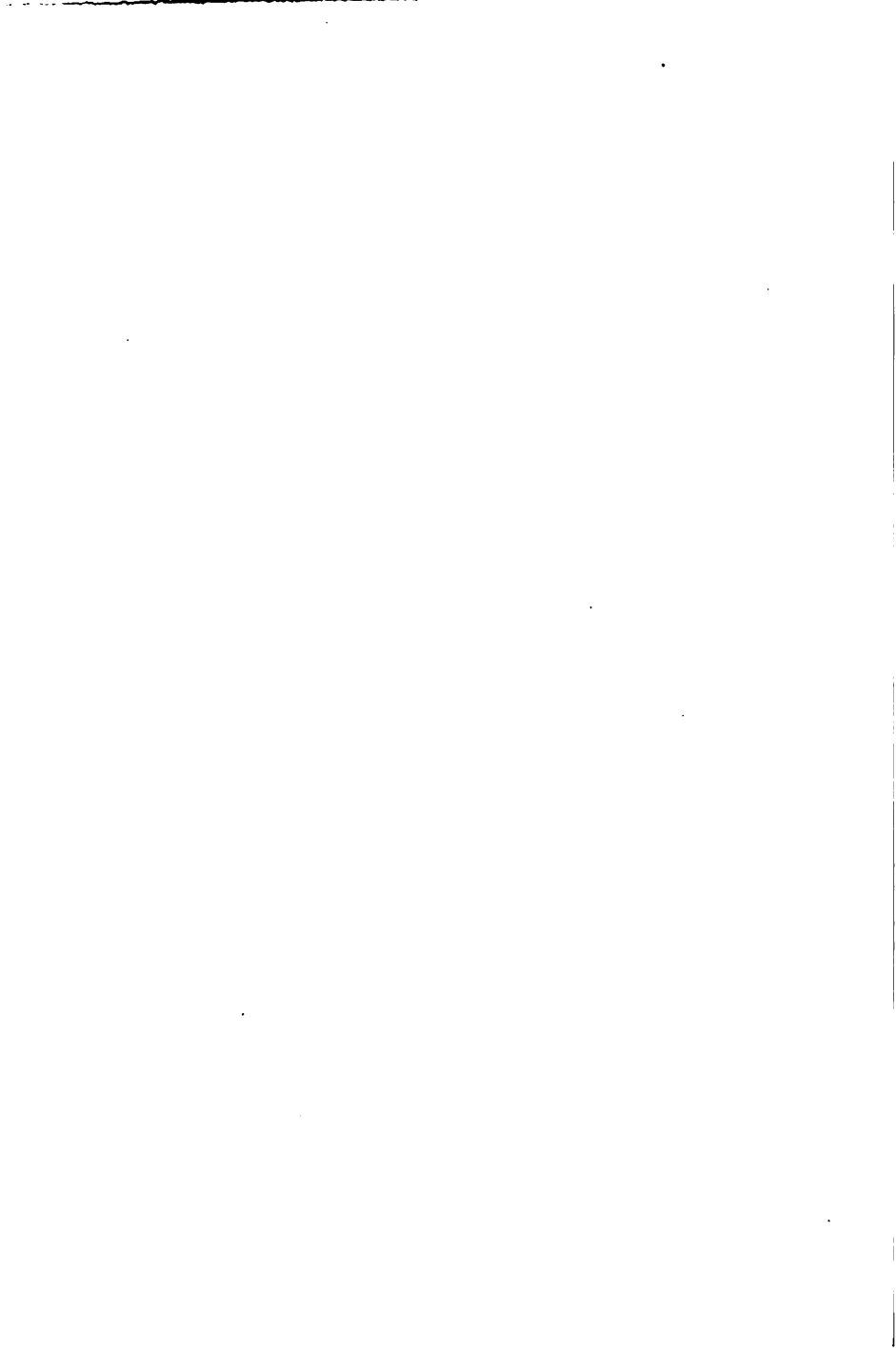
PROEM.

HAIL, great Creation ! wondrous mystery !
Divine expression of Omnipotence !
Stupendous plan ! whose all-embracing scheme,
Conceived within the unassisted mind
Of the great Self-Existent, found its vast
And most majestic accomplishment
In the eternal and almighty will
Of the Most High Jehovah,—thee I sing !
A theme most noble and most glorious,—
For that the Infinite, who sat alone
Throned in the boundless vacant Universe

Ere Time began, unfolded to Himself
The yet unopened scroll, whose mystic seal
None but Himself might break, whose characters
None but Himself might read,—since He Himself
Alone had power to inscribe therein
The future's destiny ;—and communing
With His own mighty and supernal soul,
Deemed fit to people all the Heavenly space,
Himself Artificer and Architect,
With circling orbs ; nor less to clothe the Earth
With living tenants,—plants and beasts alike
Proclaiming His beneficence, who feeds
His creatures bountifully, and sustains
With wisdom infinite and boundless love
All things that He has made.

And Thou, O great
Creator, Benefactor, Counsellor,
Incomprehensible and Wonderful !—
Whose ways we may but dimly trace,—O Thou,
Whose throne is Heaven and Whose footstool, Earth,—

Who ridest on the whirlwind, and Whose voice
 Is heard in thunders ;—do Thou deign to instruct
 My muse aright, and guide it in the path
 Of holy Truth ;—let thy directing Spirit
 Lead my aspiring Soul to Wisdom's spring ;—
 Strengthen my weakness,—and do Thou supply
 An understanding judgment to discern
 How Thou may'st best be glorified ; and teach
 My muse to soar upon a blameless wing,
 While it shall seek to expound the mysteries
 Of Thy creative deeds, and strive to shew
 How Thy stupendous works displayed around
 Are but the reflex of Thy holy Mind,—
 Faithful exponents of Thy living Word ;—
 That thus Thy great and Sacred Name may be
 Exalted over every name,—and we,
 Thy newest creatures, may, with faith confirmed
 And trust renewed, bow reverentially,
 Undoubting, understanding, loving Thee



PART I.



THE AMBASSADOR.



BOOK I.



THE ARGUMENT.

The Seer, living in a primitive and patriarchal age, is entranced, and feels his soul uplifted with a desire to know the secrets of Nature and Creation. He sees a vision of a supernatural Presence, whom he addresses. The heavenly visitant announces himself an Archangel, and describes his office. The Seer modestly enquires his errand.

WRAPP'D in an awful trance, that, slumber-like,
Sealed all the bodily channels of the mind,
And closed the accustomed avenues of life ;—
Slumber,—yet not the wonted natural sleep
Which soothes the wearied body, pouring balm
And restoration through the toil-worn limbs,
While the erst busy chambers of the brain,
Like some deserted temple, whilom thronged,
Are left all tenantless ;—but such a trance
As men say sybils have had, lifting them
To the immortal sphere, to comprehend

Behests from Heaven :—thus methought I cried—
Truly is this no sleep ! but some dread spell
Which binds the corporal eyes and ears, and chains
All that is earthly in me, motionless,
Powerless, objectless, e'en as the cold
And rigid grasp of death ! This is nor sleep
Nor death,—for yet my buoyant soul expands
And soars aloft unfettered as the air,
Pervaded with a godlike consciousness
Of Nature, and of secrets buried deep
In Nature's womb. Oh that I could but look
Behind the veil ! Oh that I might conceive
The mystery of Creation ! or could hold
Converse with those who in the obscure profound
Of Time's old reign had sat in the conclave
Of the Almighty ;—those, perchance, who were
Immortal witnesses of the sublime
Creative theme, which in the days of eld,
When Time was young and God alone was old,
Had its divine beginning !

Thus my soul,
Unclogg'd, untrammel'd, and from earth undress'd,
Soared like an eagle far above this sphere
As stars are, in the firmament ; and bore

Aloft its eager aspirations ;—sought to learn
The secrets hidden in the eternal mind
Of the All-powerful,—burned to reveal
The knowledge of Earth's sacred origin,—
The story of the boundless Universe ;—
After what manner, and from whence arose
Those golden globes which people heavenly space,
And roll their mazy and celestial course
With noiseless music and with footless dance ;—
The source of Nature,—how the plains were clothed
With living verdure, and the hills with pines
And goodly cedars ;—in what order marched,
Under the Universal Parent's wing,
The multitude of creatures which employ
Air, water, earth, to minister to each
As each has need,—to trace out line by line
The pedigree of every olden race,—
The ancient lineage of Man himself !

But vain for unassisted Man the quest !
Vain for a taper to unbare the depths
Nought may illumine but an all-glorious Sun !
Vain for a paltry spark of finite mind
To compass all the Infinite !

Then first I saw One standing at my side
Of noble aspect and majestic brow,
Whose presence filled me with a fearless awe
And reverential love. His stature tall
Seemed first colossal, like a lofty pine
In perfect symmetry, and every limb
Framed giant-like in vigorous strength and power.
Yet, as I gazed, methought the peerless form
Seemed human in its fair proportions, while
The godlike features and commanding mien
Wore such nobility and wondrous grace
As should invite to mutual discourse.
About his figure hung a robe of white,
Of sheen so pure scarce could my rapt regard
Rest on its lustrous folds, which fell around
His person like the marble drapery
On some grand statue. In his eyes were depths
Which calmly rested on me, as on one
To whom he would do service, and for whom
He bore good-will : but when in righteous ire
Indignant roused, those fiery globes could flash
Out forkéd lightnings which might blast a host
With one fierce glance in anger darted forth.
And when he spoke, his voice was like the sough

Of the night-wind,—or like a murmuring brook
Running o'er pebbles in a leafy wood ;—
And yet it echoed through the vault of Heaven
Like the reverberant and muttering roll
Of hollow thunder, when the distant storm
Sends forth its arrowy messengers.

Yet now,

When those twin glowing orbs had scanned me o'er,
No abject terror occupied my soul,
Nor adoration, (as to Him who made
A holy covenant with my forefathers,
To Whom alone was such oblation due :)
I fell not at his feet, nor kissed the dust
In his august and marvellous presence,—yet
No less I gazed with reverence profound
And absolute,—and as I gazed, I burned
To question him,—to know why such a high
And noble being had companioned me ;—
For that he bore some message seemed most clear,
And that his embassy must be of stamp
Exalted and sublime, was manifest.

Then found I tongue to frame in modest words
What I would fain desire, and thus I said :—

“Great Sir, all hail! I do perceive that thou
Art not of earthly mould ;—thy gracious form
Bespeaks thee of the Immortals, and thy front,
Most terrible to self-accusing guilt,
Bears to me blessing in it ;—and I crave
To know wherefore with such an one as I
Thou dost vouchsafe to converse.”

Then replied

With dignity most unapproachable
The heavenly visitant,—“ O mortal Man,
Most highly favoured,—thou to whom is given
To hear the counsel of the Most High God,—
Know, that in me thou seest a potent prince
Among the hosts of Heaven, clothed with power,
And holding domination under Him
Whose minister I am, and Whose behests
My glory is most loyally to perform.
More ask not of me,—for thy human spirit,
Soar how it may, cannot, without divine
And superhuman knowledge, comprehend
The Archangel’s glorious office and career,—
Ruling o’er things unseen, and from his throne
Dispensing order through the Universe,
The Viceroy of Jehovah! Such am I,—

Whom millions of divine Intelligences,
My messengers, with cheerfulness obey ;
And who, with all my noble attributes
Most royally clothed, am but the faint reflex
Of that supernal Being Whose I am,
And Whom, with exultation and supreme
Delight and joy, I diligently serve."

Amazed, I listened to this wondrous tale
Of the sublime estate of him who stood
Thus friendly by my side,—and marvelling
Wherefore this communing with mortal man
By such a princely form, I dared to ask
Most reverentially, that he would deign
To grant me knowledge, and inspire my soul
With highest meed of wisdom, to receive
The holy and divine behests of which
He was Ambassador ;—for, as I deemed,
On some high errand he was minister,
Charged with some theme of weight and dignity
From God to man, a fitting messenger
From great Jehovah's court.

BOOK II.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Archangel replies to the invocation of the Seer, first calling his attention to the varying aspect of the Seasons of the year :— Spring, —Summer,— a Summer's Night,—Autumn,—Winter,—the stormy Ocean,—and the return of life in Spring.

NOR did I err :

For bending on me his imperial brow,
He spoke, in accents like the fitful wail
Of some far-distant storm that sweeps the tops
Of nodding pine-trees on a northern crest :
And as he spoke, he raised his massive arm
And pointed upwards with his outstretched hand :—
“ Listen, O mortal Man ! and hear wherefore
The Most High God has sent me unto thee.
Thou,—and the myriads of thy human kind
That people this fair world, and gaze around
Upon the innumerable and noble gifts

Of bounteous Nature,—many a time and oft
Thou'st seen, when softening breezes have unbarred
The bands of winter,—when the snowy drifts
Melt from the Earth's embrace, and gentle showers
Unlock her genial bosom,—when the waste
Is clothed with tender verdure, and the trees
Are laden with sweet blossoms, rivalling
Their lately-fallen burden,—when the thorn
Bursts into scented bloom, and almonds blush
With early treasure,—when the yellow palms
Adorn the willowy banks of purling streams
Rippled and circled o'er with leaping fish,—
And swelling buds, like million emeralds,
Peep from their russet settings,—when the fields
Put on their many-coloured festal robes
Spangled with flowers, from which the humming bees,
Laden with sweets, fly home at eve, to swell
The riches of the hive ;—while grateful kine
Crop the fresh herbage which the meadows yield,
Or ruminating, lie,—what time the air,
Cooled with the passing shower, is painted with
The rainbow's dyes, which spans the fading east
With prised arch—as though the setting sun
Gave promise of triumphant entry, when

His morning beams should gild the sky once more,
And dry the tears of night ;—when twittering birds
Pipe out a roundelay in praise of spring,
And larks by day, and nightingales by night,
Nature's wild poets, fill the balmy air
With endless music,—when the swallows skim
On glossy wings o'er quiet sparkling pools
In joyous mazes,—and the cooing doves,
Secure in secret bowers of young green leaves,
Dally with new-found love ;—when lambkins play
With innocent gambollings and careless joy
In healthful pastures,—and the airy crowd
Of buzzing insects on their gauzy wings
Rifle the opening buds, and drone a bass
To the great Hymn of Nature. Then thou know'st
That jocund Spring-time's jubilee has come,—
Nature's new youth, o'erflowing with delight
And sunny gladness ;—each created thing
Renewed in being feels a buoyant mirth,
And things inanimate e'en seem to smile,
For that they too can minister to Life.

Then comes the leafy Summer, when the woods
Arching their thick umbrageous boughs, afford

A grateful shelter to the panting herd
Which lap the bubbling streamlet, as it trills
Its pattering lay through barred and chequered glades;
While rustling leaves, stirred by the gentle airs,
Sing lullabies to myriad fledgling birds
Which nestle in their shade, and patiently
Await the welcome oft-repeated gifts
The parents bring. Meanwhile their amorous songs,
Now hushed by sterner and more anxious cares,
No longer echo through the grove, but all
Their hopes and fears, their sorrows and their joys,
Are centred in those woven cradles, where
The helpless brood claims all their busy love.
Bright-tinted butterflies, like painted sprites
On wings of sunshine, dance from flower to flower,
Sipping their honied cups ;—knee-deep in brooks
Beneath the beechen shade, the cattle stand
Motionless, passive,—save the bending head
Which oft-times idly laps the cooling stream,
Or seeks to expel the troublous insect crowd,
Their busy torment ;—and the stagnant air,
Grown still and sultry, stimulates repose
Through the high summer noon. The quivering vault
Of liquid sky, in which the glorious sun

Is bathed as in a sea of golden light,
Dazzles the languid and averted gaze,—
All nature seems to droop ; till warring clouds
Meeting, obscure the firmament, and veil
With shades funereal the thick recess
Of overarching forests ; and the roar
Of swaying boughs and myriad chafing leaves,
Proclaim the coming tempest. Then the drops
Flash on the long parched soil, which grateful sucks
The cool refreshing shower ; while angry tongues
Of forkéd flame leap through the ghostly air,
And harmless fall to earth,—unless perchance
They rend some sylvan monarch, whose huge limbs
Straight fall in blasted ruin with a crash
Scarce heard above the mighty trumpet note
Of the conflicting elements, echoed back
Like battle-cry from thousand vantage points,
Through all the murky sky reverberate
In peals of deep-mouthed thunder ;—till suppressed
And far-off mutterings announce the strife
Near ended, and the purple clouds roll up
Like to a dusky curtain which erewhile
Eclipsed the landscape. Then the transient storm
Sweeps up the valley, till the lurid flash

Pales in the distance, and the conquering Sun,
Serene and bright, once more illuminates
The smiling earth refreshed and renovate
With copious waters ;—and the sweet perfumes
Of honeysuckle, rose, and violets,
And myriad fragrant blossoms fill the air
With odorous incense from their tiny cups,
More rich than spikenard.

And when eve steals on,
And the red orb of light and life has launched
His last low shafts to empurple all the West ;—
When the calm twilight, with its dolphin hues
Has died in loveliness, and Heaven unfurls
The spangled banner of the Summer night ;—
Then do'st thou see with joy the sable dome
With glittering stars not grudgingly bedecked,
Each diamond-like with ever-changing hues ;—
As though the brilliant and unsleeping eyes
Of Angels and Archangels numberless
Kept watch and ward while darkness spread its pall
Athwart this nether sphere, and all things sleep
Save evil beasts. Anon the radiant moon,
Rising in silvery splendour, sweeping through
The skies, their nightly sovereign, sheds its beams

In floods of dreamy, unsubstantial light
O'er all the slumbering landscape ; and the fires
Of lesser stars grow dim and fade from sight,
As by the soft effulgency relieved
From their accustomed guard.

Next, Autumn comes,
Season of Heaven's beneficence, which fills
Thy garners and your storehouses with all
The rich gifts of the year, chasing afar
The dread of famine when the wintry snows
Henceforth shall seal the bosom of the earth.
Thou see'st the fields all tapestried with gold
When the ripe grain bows down its laden head,
And carolling their merry harvest hymns
The busy reapers mow the nodding corn.
The boughs of blushing fruit trees bend to earth
Beneath their precious burden ;—purple grapes
Hang in dark clusters from the tendrilled leaves
Of climbing vineyards ;—everywhere sweet flowers
Give place to berries, seeds, and wholesome fruits,—
A bounteous table spread beneath the sky,—
A banquet, universal, plentiful,
Free to all comers. Beasts and birds alike
Partake the grateful feast ; and, taught by Heaven,

Some, using foresight, store the manna up
In caves and crevices, that they may live
When ruthless Winter with its icy blast
Has swept the crumbs away. The restless birds,
Which, softly nurtured in the balmy climes
Of southern sunshine, met the sweet young Spring,
To swell the notes in the aërial choir
Of other skies, now hasten to return,
And guide their pinions through the trackless air
With Heaven-instructed instinct ;—and the trees,
Grown weary of their livery of green
Worn all the summer through, change their attire,
And dressed in ever-varying rainbow hues,
And tints fantastic, paint the sylvan woods
With thousand brilliant dyes, as though they'd donned
A gorgeous masque at Nature's Carnival.

But now all tells of change, and swift decay
Withers the landscape with its cheerless touch,
Foreshadowing death to Nature. Day and night,
Striving for mastery o'er the powers of life,
No longer hold an even poise ; and doomed
To unaccustomed feebleness, the Sun
Shoots his slant beams across the chilly air,

Nor dares to blazon the high summer sky
With his royal quarterings,—but cowers down
Like to a vanquished giant, chained and thrall'd
Beneath the throne of Winter. Unsustained
By his life-yielding influence, Nature sinks
In listless apathy ;—the gasping trees,
As if to bury deep the dying year,
Give all their precious leaves, a summer's pride,
Falling to earth in a dry rattling shower,
To be the sport of winds, which wreath and whirl
Them into piles high-drifted ;—and the bare
And gnarléd boughs stretch forth their withered arms
Like skeletons into the frosty air,
Through which the stormy gusts wail dismally,
Singing a fitful requiem. For now
The frail and beauteous temples in which Life
Holds its divine abode, fall like ripe sheaves
Before the mower's sickle ; and the brute,
Inanimate, and soul-less forces bear
Uninterrupted sway. The driving storm,
The furious hurricane, the sweeping blast,
Hurling the whistling air o'er land and sea,
Resistless rush, beneath whose mighty breath
The toil-constructed monuments of man

Fall prostrate ; and the dry and leafless trunks
Of giant trees, which for long centuries
Have gathered strength, totter like feeble wands
Before the whirlwind. Crystal icicles
Hang from the eaves dependent, like a rank
Of serried spears, earth pointed, threatening
The dooméd breast of Nature, 'gainst whose sharp
And cruel teeth the solid waters haste
To arm themselves with mail. The fleecy snow,
Now falling softly like the gentle flight
Of feathered doves in a white noiseless shower,
Swathes the wan earth as in a silvery shroud,
O'er which the black and starless midnight heaven
Broods like a pall ;—anon a frozen rain,
It drives its icy barbs before the blast
With howling fury, blinding, pitiless,
And potent as the touch of withering fire.
Meanwhile the light accumulating flakes
Smooth all the rugged landscape, levelling
The pleasant vales where heaped-up masses lie
Deceitfully, and lure the traveller on
To unfamiliar treacherous paths, in which
Oft wandering, his faltering footsteps sink
Deep in the cold and merciless embrace

Of hungry snowdrifts; where, as on a couch
Of soft and spotless down, he slumbers out
His numbed and weary life,—and wakes no more!

But where the mighty Ocean, fathomless,
Rolls its resistless billows, echoing far,—
Filling the Earth's concave from pole to pole,—
Beneath whose heaving bosom lie concealed
Impenetrable secrets;—where the sea,
Erewhile a glassy mirror, in whose clear
And azure surface all the soft-eyed stars
Saw their reflex,—now lashed in angry waves,
Foams with mad frenzy, scattering salt rime,
And like a mettled war-horse leaps aloft
As though to wrestle with the furious air,—
Then sinks into a green and streaky vale,
Alternate conqueror and vassal;—there
The ruthless tempest holds its course unchecked,
Wildly exultant. Through the murky air
It shrieks defiance from its myriad throat;
As though a legion of contentious fiends
Scoured all the welkin on unresting wings,
Now screaming pæans of wild victory,
Now wailing of defeat. The mighty waves

Roll on affrighted,—and their curling crests,
All spray-besprinkled and beflecked with foam,
Headlong rush madly o'er the broad expanse
Of ocean, gathering impulse, till anon,
With deafening roar which drowns the sullen peals
Of hoarse-toned thunder, and with frantic rage
Unreasoning, they dash their ponderous flanks
Against some beetling cliff, which trembles 'neath
Each swift-repeated shock. The shattered flood
Baffled, soars upward, towering to the skies,—
Then, quivering for an instant in the air,
Falls like a cataract ;—and the boiling surge
Sinks back defeated with a hollow groan,
Rolling the rattling pebbles o'er the strand,
As though it sported fiercely with the bones
Of an old world.

But now the circling year
Hastens to its accomplishment, and all
The oft-repeated sights and sounds proclaim
The swift-revolving cycle once again
Complete and finished ; and the frost-bound world
That seems so dark and drear, once more prepares
To cast its icy husk, and burst the thrall
Of iron winter. Like a chrysalis,

Which, swathed within the unaccustomed bands
That cumber it like grave-clothes, strives to tear
Asunder its gross cerements, and emerge
In dazzling radiance, painted with the dyes
Which tell the new-born butterfly ;—e'en so
The sad and mourning earth, so seeming dead,
Upon whose genial bosom glassy ice
Sits like a thawless breastplate, and denies
Her creatures' wonted sustenance,—she but sleeps
Her necessary slumber, and must soon
Awake refreshed, restored, invigorate,
To meet the coming spring, and clothe herself
In festival array, such as befits
Her new-found bridegroom marching from the south
In all the matchless pomp and majesty
Of his resplendent radiance."

BOOK III.



THE ARGUMENT.

Having concluded his narration, the Archangel applies these phenomena to the physical condition of Man. The Seer expresses his delight at the recital ; and the Archangel then proceeds to show how common phenomena pass unheeded,—and appeals to the Seer if he is able to account for the existence of even the most humble creatures,—or can supply their wants ; or even if he is capable of protecting himself without assistance from above. He points out the relationship in which Man stands to the brute Creation ;—and shows that both Man and animals alike owe everything to a common Parent.

HE ceased,—

And as the tender echo of his voice,
Borne through the quiet air, swelled fitfully
Like to the solemn wind-created strains
Of some melodious harp, then died away
To whispering silence,—both of us made pause.
For while he spoke, I stood as one spell-bound,
Listening as to the diapason deep
Of some great organ which accompanied

A noble psalm ;—and thus for a brief space
Was silent, wrapt in deepest pondering
On all those wondrous though familiar scenes
Which mark the varied year, and which his words
So truthfully recalled. And as I stood
Buried in contemplation most profound,
And yearning for instruction, once again
He spoke, appealingly, and thus he said :—
“O Man ! for whom all these created things
Have mighty import,—thou, whose every need
Is bound indissolubly with the least
Phenomena of Nature ;—thou, whose life
Hangs on the weightless sunbeams, and whose breath
Floats in the ambient air,—say, have I not
With true and fair description chronicled
The changing world ; and with a portraiture,
Faithful alike in evil and in good,
Painted the Seasons, and set forth the works
Of Nature,—struggling with evil now,
Anon triumphant ;—now in direst throes
As though of dissolution, now serene,
Placid and calm, dispensing all around
The fruits of hard and dear-bought victory
To all her creatures numberless, of whom

Thou, Man, art chiefest ; and whose benefits
Thou, far above all other suppliants,
Most bountifully sharest ? ”

Thus adjured,

I with delight and gratitude replied :—
“ Great Prince, since thou dost deign to question me,
And granting me instruction most desired,
Dost seek to learn how thy most noble words
Have stirred my soul ;—know, then, that from the day
When with awakening and eager mind
I stood with reverence at my mother’s knees,
And heard the words of wisdom from my sire ;—
Never, from wondering childhood to this hour,
When with developed frame and thoughts matured
I stand within thy presence, did the clear
And pure untainted spring of knowledge yield
So deep a draught, with power to appease
The quenchless aspirations of my soul
In its bright, crystal flood :—know, thy discourse
Has sunk, as water sinks in parchéd ground,
Deep in my thirsty breast, and there has found
Responsive yearnings,—and methinks has made
Me rich beyond my fellows, with a shower
Of rubies and of pearls,—for such I deem

The words which thou hast spoken."

Thereupon

The angelic visitant took up the word :—

"O, apt to learn, and docile to be taught
In things divine, yet would I fain enquire,
Hast thou e'er pondered o'er these mysteries ?
For such they are, though like an oft-told tale
Grown common and familiar, men have learned
To trace the order of the year, to know
The sequence of its periods, and to expect
With sure forecast what time the fleecy herd
Requires fresh pasture, and the hardened earth
Demands new tillage ;—they have learned to gaze
Upon the starry sky, unquestioning
Who formed those changeless figures, or whence came
Those never-dying scintillations ;—nay !
They walk surrounded with the teeming life
Which fills the air, the water, and the earth—
Things great and small,—the creatures of a day,
And those whose lengthened span is counted by
The reckoning of decades,—every one
With its own cares and joys, and struggling each
To live with such a measure of content
As shall suffice to hedge it from the strife

Of its injurious fellows ;—yet do men
Ne'er ask, Whence all this animation ? Who
Has skill to plan their complex governments ?
Whence came their laws and customs ? Who is king
O'er all this busy people ? or Who first
Gave them their various bodies, and endowed
Those graceful forms with life and movement ? Who
Taught them the inspiration which shall guide
Their offspring surely and unfailingly
As it for ages past has led their sires—
Reason's precursor, erring not, though blind—
Mysterious Instinct ?

Knowest thou a prince
So puissant 'mongst thy fellows, whose command
Can clothe with being or endue with sense
One, e'en the lowest creature ?—or a sage
Gifted with such an all-constraining power
As should suffice for the creative deed
Of the least animate speck ?—or hast thou heard
Of a magician great and subtle, versed
In lawless arts compelled from powers unseen,
Whom angels have assisted, or whose soul
Was leagued with devils—know'st thou such an one
Whose potent spells can conjure into life

The meanest thing that moves ?—or thinkest thou
That these combined,—prince, sage, magician, all—
Could e'er devise the framework which enfolds
The merest vital spark,—or could invent
The architecture of the vilest worm
That breathes the air of Heaven ? yet each such one,
Perfect and self-contained, boasts parts minute,
Innumerable, and structure complicate,
Which, ages yet to come,—when Man has learned
In Nature's loving school his inmost powers,—
Shall painfully and nobly occupy
His godlike faculties in searching out
The hidden springs of Life.

Yet once again

Enquire, O Man, if any power of thine
Can sway the nations of this peopled earth ?
If, taking counsel of thyself, thou canst
Sustain them living, or canst aid them search
For necessary food ?—in time of drought
Canst thou supply them moisture ? or if sharp
And grinding famine stalks across the land,
Canst thou afford them nurture ?—or canst fill
Their craving myriad mouths with plenty, when
The fount of Nature, for a bitter space,

Sealed up by adverse seasons, yieldeth not
Its wonted succours?

Turn then thy regards
To thine own self, and ask if all the force
Of thy divine intelligence, or e'en
The strength of thy right arm, were capable
To rear thee safely, or to keep thee quit
Of danger and of death. Thou canst not thwart
The unseen hand that threatens thee, nor walk
Mid countless perils unscathed and secure
Of thine own strength, which is mere feebleness.
A wailing babe, thou hangest for a space
Helpless upon thy mother's breast ;—a child
Thou know'st not good from evil, nor canst tell
What will bring blessing or what curse ;—a man,
The darkness falleth on thee, and thou sleep'st
Nightly defenceless ;—and when old age creeps
Through all thy palsied limbs, thou lean'st upon
Some stalwart son, whose pride it is to aid
The tottering footsteps of his honoured sire,
And thus thy life runs on :—nor dost thou pause
To think how weak thou art,—what arm it is
Cradles thine infancy, and guides thy youth,
Watches thy manhood, and supports thine age,

With never-failing tenderness, and love
Such as a parent only feels.

Yet more—

Let royal Man boast of his intellect
How much so e'er he may, or let his pride
Of reason, and the conscious attribute
Of immortality, lift up his soul
Above the level of brute nature ;—yea,
Though with erected front he scarce may deign
To walk a king among the beasts ;—or though
He use his noblest gift, articulate speech,
To scorn the lowly herd which cowers before
Its regal master ;—yet no less are they
Kindred to one another, man and beast
Both cast in moulds allied, both flesh alike,
And frail and perishable, suffering
Like stings of hunger and like pangs of thirst,—
Both fed with the same food, and satisfied
With the same fount of water, which supplies
Each with impartial plenty ;—balmy sleep,
Grateful to each alike, restores the worn
And wearied frame of master and of slave
Without distinction felt :—and both alike,
Cast with maternal throes upon the earth,

Fret their brief space through childhood, youth, and age,
Then sink into the grave, and yield themselves
To be dissolved by chemic influence,
Ceaseless, inexorable, to quit the debt
They owe to earth and air, restoring each
Their lately borrowed elements.

Therefore,

If thus it be,—if in its inmost depths
Thy soul may recognize, though grudgingly,
That I have solely given utterance
To quenchless truth, nor seek to mitigate
Nor humble thee below the high estate
Which in the plan of Nature thou dost hold
By birthright,—for thou art in very sooth
Nature's chief masterpiece, and born a prince
With power to comprehend, nor less to wield
All natural forces, animate or dead,
Subject alone to the o'erlooking will
Of thy divine Protector,—then in truth
Thou sharest with the congregating herd,
The thing that creepeth, and the bird that cleaves
The æther with its pinions, equally
The fostering care of the same Father, Who
Alone could mould thy matchless form, or bid

The protean family of animals
Arise from out the dust ; and Who alone
Could breathe in them breath of life, and watch
Them with a fond parental care, that none,—
No, not the least of all His creatures,—might
Unheeded fall to earth. Nor thou alone
To this great Power ow'st thy being, but all
The living citizens of this fair world,—
Man, beast, or bird,—fish, creeping thing, or worm,
Stupendous or minute,—endowed with soul
And reason, no less than the grovelling mass
Which lacks or sense or motion, but yet lives
As vegetation lives. And this it is,—
This Power All-good, Almighty, which sustains,
Feeds and protects His myriad family,—
Whose eye unresting watches over all,—
Who made all, keeps all, and Who loveth all
The things which He hath made.”

BOOK IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Seer having listened with mingled feelings, recognizes and acknowledges God in all things. He craves to learn if this knowledge be not the Archangel's errand. The Archangel replies that he is sent to assist Man's groping aspirations by a direct revelation of the Origin of things,—of animate Nature,—of Man,—and his design for glory and immortality.

WHILE thus

With high discourse the Archangel held enchained
My listening ears, nor sought in vain to instil
His holy lessons in my willing mind,
Unfolding the estate of Man ; his speech
Now stirred my bosom's pride, as one to whom
Heaven's secrets were entrusted,—of a race
Paramount lords of earth and of all things
Which use Heaven's atmosphere ;—then, contrary,
My brow was humbled in the very dust,
Taught to confess how near a kinship man
Might claim with brutes,—how closely his desires

Partook their nature, and his goodly form,
Compiled from the same inert elements,
Should, like them, be dissolved.

Yet as he spake

Of the 'Great Power that ruleth equally
O'er man and beast, and, like a father, loves
The numerous and mingled family sprung
From His creative act, impartially,—
Maintaining all and watching over each
With pitying care ;—then knew I that he spake
Of the Great Only One, whose blessing riched
My prosperous forefathers,—who had made
A league with Abraham, and did manifest
Himself from out the bush which, wrapt in flame,
Yet was not burned ; and my humility
Was changed to reverential pride, since Man
Owed parentage to One so glorious, Who
Scorned not the fashioning of His own hands,
But had within the fleshly temple shrined
A soul immortal, and an intellect
To compass His intents,—a particle
Of breath divine,—a pure enkindled spark
Which could not die, nor be extinguished 'neath
The gross encumbering dust. For as we prize

A bright and steadfast burning lamp no less
For its clear radiance, though it should be turned
In the mere potter's clay,—even thus my soul
Lost not its hopes, and shone not less serene
Than heretofore, though it should be confessed
As cased in poorest dross.

Thoughts such as these
Arose unbidden in my breast, and swift
Followed his burning words ; for well I knew
He spoke in love, and that a power so high
Could hold no fellowship with falsehood, nor
That the ambassador of God could wrest
His Heaven-sent messages, which made me wise
Teaching my littleness ;—and as I mused
O'er all the words which fell upon my ears
Like music, stirring up my inmost soul,
While yet it soothed and comforted, my tongue,
Unsought, found speech, and interrupting, thus
I cried :—

“ O thou who serv'st the Most High God,
And fliest like a meteor from Heaven
To Earth with his behests,—now know I what
And how omnipotent the Parent Power
Of whom thy words have testified, for now

My ears have heard revealed the sacred truths
Which long my conscious soul has known, though yet
Uncertainly and dimly, gleaned from all
His excellent and ever-present works,
Confirmed by latest utterance of His high
Imperial messenger ; now am I sure
Of that I once might guess, that all beneath
This goodly universal canopy
Owns but one Lord and Master ; and that Man,
Erewhile proud man, as ruler o'er the Earth,
Born of His lineage, yet humbly shares
The privilege of birthright with the rest
Of all created things, though haply blest
With his most special favour, and inbreathed
With essence god-like and divine. Say, great
And radiant Archangel, who dost thus
Face to my face, as man to man, converse,
Declare I not that thou art come to teach ?
Have I not solved thy errand, and proclaimed
Thy high commission ? ”

Thus I challenged him ;
But the exalted one, with dignity
In every accent, thus replied :—“ Most true
And questionless is thy forecast, O Man ;

And righteous is thy frank acceptance of
Thy fixed estate, seeming so lowly, yet
Of origin most noble,—formed to hold
Communion with thy Creator ; whose
Effort supreme thou art ;—yea, and so high
As thy new-dawning intellect yet soars,
Thou hast interpreted my embassy
Most justly ;—for the counsel of the great
Creator God, who for uncounted ages
Has brooded o'er the universe, to frame
Its vast obedient globes, and o'er the earth
To fashion all its living commonwealth,
Is now matured and ripened ; and the thoughts
Which from His mighty soul have been expressed
In ever-swelling deeds, have this day found
Their climax most sublime. He who has reigned
From all eternity the One Supreme,
And Who, regardless of space or time,
Has sat serene and patient ;—He who holds
The golden wires of His vast Universe,
And moves the planets and the wills of men
Alike at His good pleasure ;—this same God,
Using my willing tongue, now deigns to reveal
To Man,—whom He hath made the god of Earth,

Like to Himself, His fellow-worker here,
And whom hereafter He designs to make
His glorious heir,—the origin of things
In Heaven and Earth,—above, around, beneath,—
That man no more may grope as one purblind
In the dim twilight of his intellect ;
Nor yet, unaided,—save by Reason's pale
And ineffective lamp,—may blindly grasp
At things unseen. Know then, by His command
And under seal of His authority,
That the whole vast and visible sphere of Heaven,
The firmament with all its lustrous stars,
The gorgeous sun enrobed in quenchless light,
And the fair moon, which like a veiled bride
Reflects his glory,—all these are proclaimed
Jehovah's handiwork,—all these He made,
None helping Him,—conceived by Him,
And by Him executed ;—He alone upholds
Heaven's pillars, and He checks the distant bounds
Of all the rolling orbs which course through space
With wings of lightning swiftness ; each one feels
His guiding hand, as doth a mettled steed
Its bridle, and obeys ;—the blazing sun
He first enkindled as a man doth light

A simple taper, and the ambient air
He breathed around the earth, that every thing
Inhaling it, might live.

And He who made
The Heavens for his throne, created too
This verdant Earth with all its fruits and flowers,
Its useful pastures, and its towering trees,
Laden with welcome food and healing gifts
For all His breathing creatures :—for no less
Is He Creator of the creeping thing,
The fish that swims the seas, the bird that wings
The firmament, the cattle small and great
Which occupy earth's surface, and which tread
With footsteps light or ponderous. God the Lord
Of Heaven and earth created all, and rules
Their passions and their instincts, and supplies
Them all with generous bounty :—young and old,
The strong and feeble, look alike to Him,
His general suppliants,—for He is King,
Ruler, Dispenser, Master, Father, Friend,
All, and in all,—the spring and end of life
To all His creatures.

More of Man, would'st ask ?
Shall only he desire no fellowship

With the vast family of earth ? Shall he
Alone refuse to share the Father's love
Which the wide world requires and all receive ?
Shall Man with pride and dudgeon rest content
To be a waif without the general pale
Of all created things,—and, parentless,
Be orphaned of his heavenly lineage ?
Not so,—full well thou know'st thy origin,
Better instructed ; and that thou and all
Thy human fellows form the crowning top
Of the great sentient temple built upon
The firmly founded earth, and pointing to
The heavenly stars, to which, thou, reasoning Man,
Art nearest.

Therefore with a thankful mind
Hear that thou art the Great Creator's last
And ultimate design, in all things bettering
First-made inferior creatures ;—thou the sum
Of all created things,—moulded in shape divine,—
Partaking twofold nature, His who made,
And his that is created ;—equal to
The earth-born animals in attributes
On each dependent, but akin to God
In form and likeness, intellect and soul,

By which thou visibly o'ertop'st the brutes
As stars o'ertop the plain.

Such is the proud

Estate of man, and such his charter, given
Freely by his Creator, and announced
By His supreme command ; Who wills that men
In countless generations yet to come
Shall tell it to their children's children ; that
Millions unborn may lift their voices high
In holy adoration, and proclaim
Him Lord of Lords and King of all the Earth,
Mightiest among the mightiest. Even so
His endless praises shall reverberate
Adown Time's long-drawn vista, nor shall cease
When Time shall be no more,—when the supreme
Mysterious portal of Eternity
Shall echo with the pealing anthem, sung
By the collective myriad-tongued race .
Of man immortalized,—led by the choir
Of glorified Archangels, and by all
The host of Heaven majestically swelled !
Then shall the sounding chorus roll along
Triumphant, vibrating around the throne
Of great Jehovah like the sweet incense

Entangled mazes, clewless, in the vain
And futile quest for e'en the dullest spark
Of heavenly fire,—though dimly, in some sort
To illume the dark Invisible,—but led
Henceforth by a sure lustre, he might sound
Its avenues, unheedful of the obscure
And devious paths on either hand, o'er which
Darkness still brooded, until He should deign
Higher to lift the sacred veil, or grant
Mankind intelligence to comprehend
More of His secrets.

And while I thought
On my erstwhile unaided ponderings,
And their angelic confirmation, now
Clearly from Heaven announced, I longed to ask
If more might be revealed, which yet my soul
Yearning to know, was helpless to unfold
Without divinest succour ;—prophet-like
To peer into the long-past ancient days
When Man was not, and yet no witness breathed
Of His creative workings. Then did I
Approach unboldly to the stately form
Which stood majestic at my side, as though
Awaiting further question, and I said :—

“ Illustrious teacher of the most divine
And noble mysteries of God and man,—
Thy wondrous revelation deep has stirred
My inmost spirit ; and with keenest glance
My wakening faculties have newly learned
To comprehend the sayings, which before
Would have seemed dark and meaningless ;—yet ere
Thy radiant form had flashed upon my gaze,
New-framed desires had occupied my mind
And filled it with unwonted longings, such
As then I deemed beyond the utmost verge
Of human knowledge ;—wistful ponderings,
And thoughts like stranger and unbidden guests
Crowded as phantoms o’er me, and I felt
Most deeply moved by some new influence
Of unaccustomed power, and perplexed
By inward consciousness of new-found strength
To comprehend the unrevealed. But now
Full well I know that thy o’ershadowing form
Was hovering near me, and instilling me
With superhuman contemplation,—thus
Imparting fire divine, and virtue, such
As never mortal might inherit from
His own mere reasoning.

And as thus I stood
Entranced a space, methought I cried aloud
For some angelic minister, to tell
My yearning soul the secrets buried deep
In the old grave of Time ;—what first was formed—
And what the formless substance increate
Which the Creator deigned to employ, when He
In His vast cosmic laboratory
Fashioned the new young world, and earliest planned
Incarnate Life ! Presumptuous deem me not,
If I shall crave this science, and yet more,—
By thee to be instructed in the ways
Of all created Nature ;—for thou art
Deep in the counsels of the Infinite,
And haply by Himself accredited
To impart to Man this knowledge. Noble prince,
If I do err, then visit not with wrath
My false aspirings, but to my appeal
Be gentle, knowing that my purpose is
Nowise unworthy ;—for I fain would learn
The ancient aspect of the Universe,—
Its laws and order,—the divine intent
Of its great Author. For if Man be ranked
First among creatures,—able only he

To plumb the shallows of the boundless mind
Of his Creator, and, though faintly, to
Reflect His wisdom,—if but man alone
Can supplement His labours, or can shed
A reasoning lustre o'er His works,—then, sooth
Must he be schooled, and taught in things divine,
Not lacking heavenly guidance.

Therefore, thou

Ambassador of the Most High, impart,
If unforbidden, some intelligence
Of circumstances and of places ;—grant
Knowledge of times and sequences ;—and tell,—
If it may haply stand embraced within
The compass of thy errand,—if the will
Of the great Origin of all things deigned
To be expressed in universal deeds
Sudden and instantly ;—for doubtless thus
His fiat once gone forth, the elements
Would do His awful bidding joyfully,
And thought-quick, His omnipotent command
Hearing, they would obey. Or, did supreme
Wisdom and Power combined,—to whom all Time
Is but a moment of Eternity,
And to whom ages signify no more

Than one short hour to man,—did He employ
His soul in contemplation, and His hands
In nice mechanic skill, conceiving each
Successive plan, the offspring of His vast
And comprehensive Intellect,—and each
Maturing leisurely, without regard
To His mere servant, Time ?—that every act
The Architect and Master-worker, both
In one combined, should execute, might prove
Best in its kind when finished ;—and complete,
Well-balanced, perfect,—worthy equally
Of His own glorious powers, as to engage
The admiration of His angels, and
The curious faculties of Man, who draws
Fresh stores of Wisdom daily from His works,
As from a mine exhaustless.”

Thus with doubt

I made appeal to my companion, who
Benignly heard ; and when I had made end
Of my request, and stood with downcast brow
Awaiting possible rebuke, he spoke
In tones which breathed no anger, but instead
Kindly encouragement ;—whereat I dared
To raise my eyes and meet his frank regard

More boldly ; and I saw no lowering cloud
Upon his noble features, but his looks
Serene and affable ;—and thus he said :—
“ Mortal, I blame thee not, for that thou hast
With modesty preferred thy worthy suit
For heavenly tutelage, and hast desired
With reasonable wish to comprehend
Things undiscoverable and unseen
By man’s contracted vision, yet whose plain
And evident effects and influence
Thou feel’st around thee hourly ; for the thing
Thou hast discerned, is sooth, that, craving for
Wisdom and knowledge in the works of Him
Who made thee for His reasoning ally
And capable exponent, thou dost not,
Erring, ask aught amiss, to which it is
Unlawful I should bend a listening ear,
Nor heeding, grant thy wish. For know that I
Am sent, the full entrusted messenger
Of the Most High, commissioned by His grace
And sovereign condescension to reveal
His purposes in all the finished past ;
And with no reservation to declare
That thou hast, with no undue confidence,

Dared to demand.

The mighty God, who framed
The Universal Empire of the Stars,
And with laborious wisdom fixed the laws
Of the created temple in the which
He deigns to dwell ;—He, whose all-skilful hands
Moulded the various surface of the world
In hills and dales, and weighed the mountains out
As in a balance ;—He, whose fingers traced
The course of mighty rivers, and Who holds
The ocean in his palm ;—Who took delight
In carpeting the earth with verdurous glades,—
In peopling sombre forests with the beasts
Which wake their nightly echoes,—and the air
With feathered nations, many-dyed,—and seas
With teeming hosts of mailed and finny fish,
Which hover round the vast Leviathan
Like motes in a bright sunbeam ;—He, who set
As ruler o'er the restless commonwealth
An offshoot of Himself, empowered to hold
Dominion over all, in virtue of
His own reflected qualities and form
Pre-eminent,—has purposed that His acts
Should not lack witness. And though the profound

Abyss of Time conceals His earliest deeds,—
And though the vast constructive theme had birth
In His own soul, when yet there was no man
Nor angel to companion Him, nor aught
Of reasoning in the universal void
Save that which centered in Himself,—yet can
The Orderer of all things so dispose
That witness shall be found, to celebrate
His truth in all the noble acts in which
He was Original,—Beginning and End,—
Inventor and Contriver. And He wills
That Man—whom He hath given a spark of soul—
Shall fan it with contemplative insight
Into His infinite and excellent
Incomparable design ;—that thus the spark
May kindle to a clear and steadfast flame
Of heavenly fire. He has willed that Man
Shall feed his understanding with the works
Of universal goodness as with strong
And savoury meat, and thereby gain anew
Fresh increment of intellect ; that he
May so be fitted for his high estate
And holy destiny,—discoverer
Of God in all His marvellous works

For each

Created thing, majestic or minute,—
Matter unanimated, or instinct
With life and movement,—tells alike of Him.
Each smallest crystal pebble which lies hid
Deep in earth's bosom, no less than the hills
And serried mountains, whose aspiring peaks
Cleave the light clouds and rend them into shreds
Fantastic and impalpable,—bear the impress
Of the Creator's hand ; and e'en the least
Invisible insect which imprints no sign
Of being on the gross unaided sense,
No less than the colossus which vibrates
The solid earth with elephantine tread,
And browses on the mighty trees of some
Primæval forest, recount the design
Of Him who deigned to occupy Himself
In moulding each as fittest to fulfil
The appointed station. How then can thy kind
Gifted with intellect, more nobly walk,
Than in the footsteps of the Eternal ? or,
Tracking the labyrinth of the supreme
Creative Wisdom, seek to penetrate
The hidden centre, whence all light divine

And heavenly effulgence emanates ?

For thou,

As He who reads thy soul sees patently,
Art of a curious mind, and thy desires
Are not mere grovelling, like the beasts, but soar
Upwards, expanding ;—willing not to pine
Enchained upon this nether soil, to which
Partly thou art born heir,—for part thou art
Heir also of the vaulted skies and all
The heavenly space, which fits thy higher spirit
And immaterial part more aptly, as
Lending thy soul free scope. And though thou art
Yet merely ignorant, and but darkly feel'st
Thy innate powers, yet no less thou stand'st
Within the vestibule of Wisdom's fane,
Unconsciously prepared to enter in
The sacred precinct, when thy immortal eye,
In Time's completed fulness shall endure
To gaze undazzled on the wondrous sheen
Of its undying lustre. For as thou
Art first a child, then man,—at first a blank
Unwritten virgin page, then a fair scroll
Lettered with holy thoughts and deeds (unless
Disfigured and defaced with evil blots

And crooked characters,)—so is the mind
Of all thy race component, and of Man
The intellect collective ;—first unschooled,
Lacking all understanding to perceive
The true design of things,—without a hope
Beyond the present hour, or dawning wish
To learn futurity, or pierce the veil
Of mutual influences ;—until faint
And iterant impressions, day by day
Unconsciously imbibed, arouse new thoughts
And aspirations of a nobler scope,
Embracing Nature and the cause of things ;—
And thus the awakening soul by painful steps
Asserts its heavenly birth, and seeks to know
Where it has lighted,—what is kin to it,
Undying,—what, mere earthly, is not,—how
It chanced to be without companionship
Save of its kind ;—aspires to know wherefore
Nature encompasses it, and with gifts
Goodly and bounteous enriches it
E'en to its utmost need. Then does Man yearn
To know what spirit animates the dead
And senseless Earth to minister to all
His craving wants,—what greater Power than his

Provides the teeming creatures which surround
Him as with miracles, exhibiting
Each in its small though independent sphere
A microcosm,—manifesting each
The mystery of Life, and each endowed
With varying share of instinct,—from the worm
Which, scarce more feeling, burrows in the clod,
To the half-reasoning faithful dog, confessed
Man's chief companion.

Thus from smaller things

The soul, instructed by the precepts stored
In the unwritten book, becomes athirst
For higher wisdom, reaching out afar
If haply it may grasp some secret hid
Beyond the common pale ; or may unbare
Some distant cause, by tracing back the steps
Of visible knowledge to the concealed fount
Original, whence springs its impulse ;—or,
If that be vain, to scan with curious eye
All things encompassing ; and to enquire
How one may shed its luminous beam askant
Reflected o'er another,—rendering clear
The heretofore obscure ;—or else to learn
How many a mazy lock of Nature's cells

Flies back unbidden at the mystic touch
Of keys, which long time have, though unsuspect,
Lain in her open palm, or wait alone
Earnest and frank demand."

BOOK VI.



THE ARGUMENT.

The Archangel continues his discourse, sketching the gradual progress of the awakening human intellect,—announcing that the time for enlightenment had arrived, and that he is sent to afford that enlightenment by a single great revelation, which shall forestal the knowledge that may be slowly gathered in the future. Pondering upon the Archangel's discourse, the Seer diffidently hesitates to believe that he is to be the chosen recipient of the revelation. The Archangel rebukes his doubts, and assures him that he is appointed to be the highly-favoured instructor of mankind.

“SUCH then has been

Of Man the infant intellect in times
Accomplished and fulfilled ; and such his thoughts,
Enquiring, like a child's,—but, like a child's,
Incapable of pondering, or of deep
And earnest contemplation ; surface-struck
By wonders grown familiar, but which oft
Have sudden startled with a quick surprise,
As quick forgotten, when some new event

Or circumstance unwonted chases out
The old astonishment, yet have not left
Aught deep impressed, nor any furrow where
The seed may lie esconced, and germinate
In newly-found perceptions,—and may sprout
In thoughtful musings,—and shoot out green leaves
Of ardent longings,—and bear tender buds
Of quiet meditation,—and sweet flowers
Of holy aspirations,—and fair fruit
Of noblest wisdom, worthy of the soul
Inhabiting this goodly form.

But now

This long probation ceased, thy powers divine
Have found a frëer scope and more mature
Development ; and soaring far above
Mere childish wonder and inane surprise,
Grown capable of admiration deep
And lively interest ;—rest not satisfied
With superficial surmise, but employ
Painful and deep inquiry, sparing not
Laborious search for things not evident ;
Ransacking all the vaults of Nature's crypt
In the absorbing, never-ceasing quest
For deathless truth. And often may'st thou feel

A keen delight in the discovery
Of some new link connecting that thou know'st
With the yet undiscovered,—filled with joy
That thou canst yet another step advance
Along the path of knowledge.

Yet, O Man,

Is knowledge relative ;—and though thou art
Wise as a god in high comparison
With meaner creatures, yea, and though thy soul
Is educate by ages, since the time
When infancy did trammel all thy powers,
And scarcely could'st thou guide thy tottering steps
In the broad avenues of prime principles ;—
Though now thou art in manhood's earliest blush,
Prepared to wrestle, and endowed with strength
Of intellect mature and young,—perchance
Eager to raise an edifice, whose top
May kiss the heavens, a temple dedicate
To Wisdom and to Wisdom's God ;—yet still
Has dawning fancy pictured to thy mind
The mere conceit of such a structure, whose
Foundations yet are scarcely hollowed out
From ignorance and apathy, to rest
Upon the base eternal and secure

Of truth divine revealed. For yet thou need'st
That I am come to bring thee,—that sure rock
On which thou may'st build safely, fearing not
Future mischance or hidden accident,
Or aught might mar the noble symmetry
And exquisite proportions of the fair
And ever-rising pile.

For that thou hast
By inspiration sought to be informed
In things concealed and secret, shall, by Heaven
Be freely granted thee ; for now has come
The hour long since foreseen and foreordained,
When Man's intelligence has overleaped
The gradual course of science, vaulting o'er
The opposing obstacles, as though possessed
Of airy pinions whose impatient flight
Spurns common rules, and weary of the slow
Inductive process, with its eager gaze
Fixed on some distant goal, which lies perchance
Far in the region unattainable
Of supernatural wisdom, passes by
Near common things unheeded, ceasing not
To strain its mental vision with the hope,
Vain and delusive, that its gleaming eyes

Might pierce the infinite.

But though thou may'st
Not unassisted soar so high, nor reach
That dizzy pinnacle without support
And help omnipotent, yet will that help
Be surely given thee, and that support
I bring thee ;—not as one who ever stands
A mentor at thy side to aid thy steps
Whene'er they stumble, or to guide thee back
When thou hast wandered into devious paths
Which lead to mazy error,—but to teach
One lesson fundamental, which thy skill
Unaided ne'er could penetrate, until
Thousands of years of labour so have school'd
The minds of all the chiefest of thy race,
That willingly they shall submit to clip
The artificial wings on which too high
They had been wont to soar, losing themselves
In metaphysic speculation,—and
Return to earth, to examine if perchance
Truth may not lie concealed within the clods,
Nor Time may be exhumed from out the dust
Of buried ages. Then shall they doubtless find
That stone I bring thee for thy temple ;—thus,

In future generations, when my high
And heaven-instructed message shall but seem
Mere shadowy words grown mythic through the gray
And heavy mist of centuries, they shall learn
That the eternal Word of Truth remains
Unaltered, and by their industrious lore
Justly established. But meanwhile thou hast
Thy firmly founded rock, on which to raise
The ambitious temple, in defect of which
No superstructure may endure, nor e'er
Achieve perfection ;—and as the Most High
Creator God has of His sovereign will
Vouchsafed this noble boon, in manner like
Hereafter He will grant a corner-stone
To crown the finished edifice.”

He ceased

His high discourse, and all -expectant, I,
With head erected and with listening ear
Intent, drank in his spirit-stirring words
As one who hears strange things ; and when his voice
No more like plashing waters broke the calm
And silent air, I stood as listening still,—
For still he seemed to speak, and to my soul
His words seemed still addressed, nor knew I if

My outward ears, or if my inmost mind
Took impress: and awhile I stood all-mute,
Revolving many things ; but chiefly why
To me this revelation should be made.
But lastly found I tongue wherewith to thank
And question him, and thus I said :—

“ O, Sir !

Who comest holding in thy princely hand
A boon so worthy the beneficence
Of the Great Framer of the Universe
And Parent of all good ;—well hast thou shown
The need in which I stand, and all with me
Who seek to know Him, and the wondrous works
Created by His skill ;—and all my soul
Feels gladdened and elated, as imbued
With the new wine of promised knowledge ;—yet
Fain would I first enquire if that aright
My ears, as true and faithful messengers,
Have carried thy intents ; nor, to my mind
Imperfect aids, too eager may have borne
Splendid deception. Tell me then, I pray,
Most radiant messenger of Truth, if these
Retrospect prophecies shall be revealed
To me, who am no whit more worthy than

My fellows, to be nobly singled forth
To such great honour and renown ; but who,
Consciously humble, feel my nothingness,
And know not aught of high desert which might
Distinguish me for such divine regard."

Then the Archangel, stretching forth his hand
With solemn gesture :—" Of thy worthiness
Let God be judge ! nor trouble not thy soul
With doubtings vain, since a high destiny
Is freely given thee, and all unsought
A heavenly vocation ;—for thou art
In truth the chosen one, to whom it is
Granted to learn the oracles of God,
And hear the mystic words which issue from
The springs of Wisdom ;—thou art he to whom
I am sent, Heaven's interpreter, to lift
The veil, which, since Time's youth, has hid the deeds
Which were unwitnessed, save but by the host
Which gazed with admiration, and with awe
Watched the Creator's finger, but no share
Took in the work divine,—unless as swift
And sudden messengers more arrowy
Than light ethereal, they bore His will

To all the outposts of the Universe.
And thou art chosen to instruct mankind
Of creature and Creator,—that no more
The firmament of bright material stars,—
No more the lordly sun, nor his pale spouse,
May hold usurped dominion, nor enthrall
Men's wandering souls, which, erring, have confused
Effects with causes, and have thus transferred
Jehovah's homage to the senseless globes,
His fingers modelled,—dreaming foolishly
Those ever-rolling orbs could e'er supplant
His Providence by their vain horoscope.
Yet worse,—since brutish beasts and reptiles foul
Receive oblation all unknowingly,
And wrest their Maker's glory from the hands
Of men, grown like them, brutish and obscene ;
To whom the docile ox stands for a God,
Or ravening crocodiles cased in the slime
Of Nilus' fertile flood."

BOOK VII.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Seer humbly accepts the high calling. But the Archangel desires him to restrain the natural impatience of his soul, reminding him of the infinity of knowledge, and the finiteness of the human mind. He assures him, however, that although he shall be temporarily inspired, Man must use his own faculties to acquire wisdom; and this very revelation will, in times to come, be corroborated by his progressive accumulations of knowledge:—the earth itself bearing witness to its truth; and thus Men shall ultimately be led to reverence the Old Revelation. The Archangel then explains that the revelation will take the form of a series of vivid living pictures, which he will himself verbally interpret;—that they shall occupy six day-like periods,—after which God shall, as it were, rest from creating.

IN silent awe

I listened, and I felt the mild rebuke

Which taught me not to challenge heedlessly

The will of the All-wise. But though I burned

To unveil the promised secrets, and to know

What term was set to finite intellect

By infinite perception,—and to learn

The limits which should clog relentlessly

Mere mortal aspiration ;—in what guise,
And through what source the knowledge coveted
Might reach my faculties ;—what sense should be
His chief interpreter ;—if to my ear
Or keener eye should the impress be borne
Of wisdom which should render me akin
To prophets ;—yet I reverently paused.
Meanwhile, as though my inmost thoughts he scanned,
The inspired Archangel his discourse renewed :—

“ Needs must I counsel thee that patiently
Thou should’st possess thy spirit, and await
With calm discretion the appointed hour
Which brings enlightenment ;—yet, that thou dream’st
Of lofty things which pass the common scope
Of man, I hold thee blameless,—for thou may’st
In truth gaze with unfilméd eyes above
The crests of all thy fellows ; yet deem not
That thou shalt be as God when thou hast learned
The mystery of Creation, nor e’en that
Thy knowledge shall be boundless, unconfined
By bands of weak humanity. For know
That the celestial angels bow their heads
Before the Fount of Wisdom, and that e’en

Chiefest Archangels are constrained to veil
Their radiant faces e'er they may approach
The never-failing spring original
Of Universal Science. But thy mind,
Which earth alone has taught, can ne'er outstep
The moulding of thy race, nor may conceive
Nor comprehend more than itself can teach
To minds like it endowed. Therefore shalt thou
So much discover of the character
Of the Creator God as may befit
Thy finite nature, and may nourish thee
With food for endless contemplation, till
Thy race o'erleap the knowledge, and demand
Fresh pasturage for thought. For what avails
That thou should'st be inspired with bootless lore
Outstripping Nature?—or that thou, a Man,
Should'st walk a demi-god among thy peers,
O'erladen with crude wisdom, which thy mind
Could nor digest nor methodize? or how
Would thy disciples among human-kind
Aught profit, if thy parable transcends
The scope of their insight. For by mere sense
Do ye yet judge, nor may ye apprehend
Things contrary to sense, nor understand

Resulting truths, unconscious of the steps
Which compass them ;—and haply thus the tale
I am by Heaven commissioned to unfold
Might seem an idle fable in thine ears,
Or to thy followers prove a beacon-fire
False and deceptive, solely rendering clear
Distrust and unbelief.

Therefore shalt thou
Be stimulated by a wise degree
Of superhuman judgment, and divine
Discernment justly meted, by whose aid
The oracles vouchsafed to thee shall sink
Into a docile mind, unclogged by doubts
And vain imaginings, and capable
Of faithful exposition, and exact
Impartment to thy brethren.

For the Lord
Endowed mankind with virtue from Himself,—
Of His own essence ;—His far-seeing eye
Discerns what noble powers may expand
From Man's implanted faculties, and wills
That of himself he make discovery
Of Nature's secrets, toiling in the mine
Of pure inductive reasoning ; and thence

From scattered elements to reconstruct
The thought of his Creator, and evolve
His Mind in general, Universal Law,
Embracing all things ;—nor does He see fit
That His new creature's busy intellect
Should grovel sluggishly, uncultivate,
Imbibing curious draughts of natural lore
By miracles of Revelation ; nor
Does His supernal Wisdom e'er impart
Itself, unsought, to any,—but reveals
Its riches to the patient labourer
And loving scholar who shall seek in truth,
With simple, childlike faith.

For that I come,
Ambassador of Heaven, to render clear
By no uncertain light, will but foreshow
The trophies which thy race shall later win
By force of their own reason, when the toil
Of countless generations has amassed
Accumulated wisdom, and discerned,
By slow and weary steps, which yet elude
Thy infant knowledge, the resultant ends
Ere long to be unveiled. Yet has it pleased
The omnipotent Creator to forestal

The natural progression of thy kind ;
Untimely suffering that I should divulge
Creation's wonders from His secret store
Of consummated deeds. For know that He
Hath left His witness in the finished world
To testify His work ; and every rock
And rugged mountain shall proclaim aloud
To future time the story of their birth
With trumpet-voice, though dumb, that every one
May know the Earth to be the Lord's, and all
Its fulness,—and may trace in every stone
His finger, and in every crystal see
His workmanship ;—that he who runs may read
Holiest lessons in unwritten words
On all things compassing. And in that day
Shall thy posterity with eagle glance
Scan all the tell-tale earth, and drag to light
Its hidden mysteries, slowly rendering firm
The shifting base of knowledge, till it build
A sure foundation from which, step by step,
It may ascend, and scale the dizzy height
Of olden Revelation.

Thus the new
And wondrous story of thy dwelling-place

And all its peoples, but anticipates
Thine own sublime invention, lacking which,
Thou hadst no title to a partnership
In secrets so divine. Nor this alone :—
But when the night of dim futurity
Shall brighten with the coming dawn, and blaze
With the full splendour of the glorious sun
Of present noonday, shall thy lineage
In times far distant fondly reverence
The old divine foundation, understood
And recognized as the infantine creep
Which heralded the sturdy power to breast
The heights of mountain pinnacles, till then
Deemed inaccessible. For such shall be
The destiny of Man, to estimate
Aright his Maker's works, and to show forth
His glory by proclaiming all His deeds
To a perceptive world,—when in the full
Accomplishment of time, his ripened powers
Shall enter into their inheritance
Of inborn wisdom, and he shall attain
His birthright of matured Intelligence.”

With heedful care I listened to the voice

Which, like an anthem, pealed in harmony
With my attuned spirit, and foretold
The proud intent and noble end which God
Had foreordained for Man ;—in coming time
To be the chosen chief Interpreter
Of all His mighty deeds,—discoverer
Of all His wise designs,—and great High Priest
Of His deep mysteries :—but, ere I spoke,
Renewed he his discourse :—

“ But thou hast sought

To be forewarned in spirit in what guise
And through what sense the promised evidence
Shall sink into thy soul. Know then that thou
Shalt be entranced, and be caught up into
Chambers of imagery, wherein thou shalt
See visions, passing all that have been shown
To mortal man ; for thine enkindled eye
Shall shine with heavenly fire, which straight shall purge
The thick and filmy vapours which encase
Thy dull material orbs, and penetrate
The shadowy unseen with sharpened glance,
Endowed as angels, to perceive and know
Things merely spiritual, of which human ken
May take no note. Then shalt thou hear the voice

Of the Creator shake the vault of Heaven,
Whose potency shall weave a spell o'er Time,
Making the past the present, and recal
In living visions the long buried dead,—
Restoring the old strife of elements,
Reviving the hoar agonies of earth,
And clothing the dry skeletons of each
Successive race with momentary flesh,
And transient life and movement.

For the Lord

Shall cause them all to pass before thy face
In visible procession, holding true
The stablished course of Nature ; and He will
Deign of His condescension to rehearse,
For thy behoof, His chiefest deeds, since first
He laid the old foundations of the world
In void infinity ;—and thou shalt view
What angels only partly have discerned,—
Great epochs of Creation,—from the first
Chaotic Universe, when nought was formed,
Till the consummate time when thy last race
Have occupied the Earth, and have subdued,
All creatures to itself. Nor shall thine eyes
Be left untutored, for while yet the impress

Of the mysterious pageant shall remain
On thine astonished sight, shall I stand near
To guide and counsel thee, and to declare
The concealed meaning and intent of all
That to thy wondering and unschooled gaze
May lack design or reason, or may seem
Strange and ambiguous. And thou shalt speak
With fearless free sincerity, as man
Speaks to his equal fellow,—nor will I
Disdain to be thy frank Interpreter,
By Heavenly warrant justified.

But this

So mighty Revelation shall employ
Thy faculties no brief unreckoned space,
But each successive period shall mark
Its pictured progress twixt the boundaries
Of one short seeming day, whose evening
Shall darken o'er thy sense with mystic cloud
Pregnant with images of eld ; from which
The radiant morning shall emerge, to light
Thy transcéd soul to earth, to gather strength
For new sublime employ. Thus shall the days
Be each fulfilled in order to the sixth,—
Each swelling with fresh import, and each one

Revisiting the hoar extinguished past,
And glimpsing an eternity of Time
In its brief visioned span. And when the sixth
Is finally achieved, in which thou shalt
Perceive thy youngest race, lords paramount,
Holding dominion over all the Earth,—
Shall God rest from creating, as it were
A sacred seventh day ;—not as a man
Reposes, being wearied,—but as One
Who contemplates a vast complete design
Evolved with patient labour from the depths
Of His surpassing wisdom, on which He
Has lavished prodigal expedients
Of peerless excellency,—and behold !
The sum is faultless, perfect ! and each part
Præeminently Good ! ”

BOOK VIII.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Seer desires to be clearly instructed as to the duration of Creation, lest in after times men may fall into error. The Archangel replies that all God's works were maturely considered ; for he worked as man works, only He had no regard to Time ; nor did He hasten the accomplishment of His scheme of Creation in six days, (which would be indeed sufficient for the mere image of it,) but he prepared the world slowly and deliberately for the reception of animal life, and lastly of Man, who thus became the keystone of the whole structure. He appeals to the Seer which design appears to him the most noble. The Seer at once expresses his belief that the slowly elaborated Creation exceeded in nobleness the idea of a mere six days' work. The Archangel commends his judgment, and invites him forthwith to the fulfilment of his aspirations.

THUS, as he paused,
I dared to interpose, for I would fain
Be certified in speech not undefined
From the Archangel's guileless lips, if I
Unerring may have gathered his intent
In oracles last uttered ;—and I said,—
“ Most noble and illustrious Minister

Of the Most High, I pray thee deem me not
Boldly importunate, if I should crave
To be unfailingly instructed in
Matters not unessential, which meseem
Of grave import ;—for thou hast said that all
These spectacles of marvellous design
Shall be enframed in the strict interspace
Of six brief measured days ;—yet not the less
Hast thou oft-times declared Creation's span
Scarce limited by Time. Expound, I pray,
This mystery,—for such methinks it may
Be deemed in coming generations, when
This miracle have mazed men's intellects,
And crooked counsels may divert the stream
Of Holy Truth in tortuous channels, where
It shall perchance admix with cunning rills
Of error and deceit. For that on me
Thou hast no niggard share of reasoning
Deigned to bestow, boots not, if afterward
Minds more obtuse shall wantonly erect
Their altar of distorted sophistry.
Above the smoking embers of Divine
And Heaven-born Truth,—thus (if 'twere possible)
To extinguish and defile what e'en must be

Unchanged and everlasting. Tell, then, thou
Great envoy of Jehovah, in the act
And execution of His sovereign plan,
What ages rolled, or what swift moments fled ?
Say ! have I not discerned thy mind aright—
That centuries unnumbered chronicled
The moulding of the Universe,—while days
Short, few, and concise shall suffice to paint
Its brief succinct epitome ?”

“E’en so,”—

Returned the courteous Archangel,—“well
Hast thou my strange recital glossed,—and that
Thou hast so profitably asked, shall meet
Clear and distinct response. Bethink thee then
Which is more noble seeming ?—for the Lord
Was arbiter of His own mighty acts, and could
Take only counsel with Himself when He
Ordained the scheme of Nature,—His mere will
Could frame an animal or found a world
Alike, with sudden thought-like swiftness,—or
With slow methodic leisure dignify
Each gracious model. But the Infinite
Long ages reckons as a day, and Time
But as the sabbath of a seventide week ;

Nor would He His surpassing work perform
Unthoughtfully, lacking due care or skill.
Upon His miracles no marks of speed
May be discovered,—no unseemly haste,—
Nought unconsidered or precipitate ;—
But each triumphant act shews forth His grave
Contemplative and prudent thought, that no
Imperfect weakness in minutest parts
May mar the general whole.

For God hath made

Man like Himself,—and therefore like a man
He works, and guided by like principles
Of adaptation,—both alike in kind,—
And differing only as a giant tops
A pigmy dwarf, or as the radiant sun
Outshines a glimmering taper. Therefore thou
Art capable of judging His designs
And gauging His intents, and following
Afar the traces of His noble skill ;
And thou may'st comprehend how He maintained
His wondrous vigil o'er the budding world
And patiently endured, nor recked of Time
And rolling ages while the glorious work
Expanded 'neath His fingers, and became

Instinct with order, loveliness, and last
With multifarious Life.

Thus rose the Earth
From the dark void, and all the Universe
Accompanying,—and slowly lingered through
Its stage of throes and travail ;—sparing nought
Of all its agonies, nor hurrying on
By smallest jot of Time the appointed space
To strengthen its foundations, and enrich
Its walls with every precious merchandise
Of stone, or metal, or of sparkling gem
Which might find use hereafter,—while yet nought
But senseless rock and raging seas possessed
The groaning weary waste. . Yet did not He
Unduly hasten, or impatiently
Abridge their slow protracted processes,
Nor lessen aught of all the extended coil
Of circling lustrums, in whose long embrace
Were incubated the primæval forms
Of earliest Life. Nor when His solid ground
Rose from the universal sea, and gave
A resting-place for the earth-fitted feet
Of His terrestrial family, did He
Urge on His latest beings to possess

The new-acquired soil,—but planted first
Vast solitary groves, whose foliage
Might vanquish the foul vaporous air, and chase
Its poisonous exhalations, binding them
To present harmless service, and no less
To future noble profit and employ
By yet unwombéd creatures. And when these
Desert and silent forests had subdued
The noxious atmosphere, enchaining all
Its floating venom in their sturdy trunks,
Then first ignoble reptile hordes essayed
To snuff the heavy air yet undistilled
Of qualities unfit for the inbreath
Of brutes of higher mould. And, ages long,
Ranged they through marshy forests, nor gave place
To gaily-plumaged birds, and generous flocks,
Till the oft-changed and slow perfecting Earth
Afforded pasturage of dale and hill,
And rills of wholesome water, and the balm
Of pure refreshing breezes. Then arose
Four-footed beasts and cattle of the plain,—
Great tuskéd elephants, and creatures small
That crept amid the herb ; and many a form
Of mighty stature, which hath left no print

Of its existence on the astonished sense
Of all thy present race,—but whose vast bones
Furnish earth's olden catacombs, and lie
Deep-buried, solemn, silent witnesses
Of the accomplished past, and of an age
Long since, though tardily, fulfilled.

And last

Most regal, as the latest born, appeared
Thy God-shaped image, youngest son of Earth,
Newest and best device of Heaven, which shall
Inherit all this structure, and enjoy
The noble fruits of all this lavish age
Of busy preparation ;—like the crest
And crowning statue of some pillared height
Or lofty monumental temple, built
With slow laborious toil, and decorate
With myriad cornices and frets diverse
Of bright unnumbered colours, blending all
In sweet harmonious unity, to be
The worthy pedestal of some great name
Renowned above all other ;—nor would such
Afford significance or sense while yet
No effigy filled its appointed niche,
And yielded it perfection.

E'en so, thou
Art vantaged on the organic pedestal
Of Nature and of Time, and hold'st the clue
Within thy grasp which shall unravel all
The woof of the Creation. Judge then, thou,—
For thou art capable,—hath not God more
Honoured His Name, and glorified His might
In patient waiting while His Universe
Endured through countless ages, and achieved
A slow maturity, accomplishing
In all its mazed and labyrinthine tracks,
And weaved and complicate intricacies,
His own exalted model,—than if He,
With suddenly-devised ingenious skill,
Using no preparation, and devoid
Of ultimate design should, motiveless,
Throw off a brief gigantic six days' task,
Wonder of each succeeding age,—then rest,
And work no more ?”

“Nay !” I exclaimed, “what need
That I should answer thee, or justify
Man's humble claim to judge ?—for thou in sooth
Hast spoken like an echo to my thoughts,
Which dared not utterance, unfortified

By thy celestial dictates ;—and meseems
The nobler Universe, by right prescript
Of venerable hoar antiquity,
Ennobles more the ultimate design
For whose behoof its sere foundations old
Were primally established, and the End
Which oft-times thou hast frankly signified
To be the exalted destiny of Man,
And his imperial dignity. Therefore
Is my discernment,—of which thou hast deigned
Thus to inform thyself,—in unity
With thy diviner insight ; and accord
Attunes my highest thoughts with thine."

"E'en so,"—

Rejoined the angelic Presence, "nor shalt thou
Longer await the promised good, for which
Thy full-fraught soul, already harmonized
By store of holy precepts, pants athirst.
Further delay boots not, for with full meed
Of preparation is thy docile mind
Amplly instructed, and with profit may
Obtain thy spirit's wish. Enter thou then
The mystic cloud,—for God invites thee in,—
And He will shew thee all His Majesty."

1

PART II.



THE VISION.

BOOK I.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Seer is caught up into an unknown and desert mountain, where through the gloom he discerns the form of the Archangel, who announces the original Divine Creation of the formless world, and shows the Seer the Vision of Chaos. He explains the antagonism of fire and water. The Vision is then resumed, and the Seer, half terrified, requests interpretation, which the Archangel grants. The Seer further asks for explanation of a supernatural appearance, which he had observed in the chaotic vision. It is explained to him that this was the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters.

The Archangel then directs the Seer's attention again to earth, where Light is about to break through the darkness. The command given, "Let there be Light!" The first appearance of Light, although no Sun is visible. Life commences. The morning breaks and ends the first day's work.

DARKNESS enshrouded me, what time I stood
On an exalted pinnacle, where all
Around me was unknown, and weird, and strange;
Nor knew I aught of whither I was rapt,—
Save that my feet, without their wonted steps

Conducting, trod some solitary earth
Far off the usual gathering place of men,
And fixed me on a vantage-point, from whence
I might gaze down ;—as looks the king of birds,
The Eagle, from his eyrie, when the dawn
Streaks the refulgent East, and bids him scan
The circling nether plains ;—so did I strain
My sightless eyeballs, for a gloom profound
Barred present knowledge of the unknown crest
Whereon I stood expectant. Yet though all
Was dark, no horror held my soul, nor yet
Did solitude oppress me, for I felt
A Presence with me ;—yea, and when I looked
For strength and comfort, mid the gloom I saw
The noble godlike form, exhaling light
Which mere material darkness could not quench,
Stand radiant at my side.

Thus patiently
What should betide awaiting, yet durst I
Not question curiously, as one who fears
To incur deserved rebuke, and moments fled
Which recked as hours, the while my soul revolved
What first should rivet its unwonted gaze
Of spectacles ne'er seen by mortals,—such

As angels and God's messengers alone
Had viewed by His permission.

Then the great
And potent Prince beside me, suddenly
Breaking the awful silence which had fallen
Upon us both, proclaimed in tones which thrilled
Like heavenly music :—

“ In the beginning God
Created Heaven and Earth !—*

Thus much, O Man,
Is given thee to know of that hoar time
When these had a beginning,—and when all
The Universe would yet have been unborn,
But that the will incomprehensible
Of the Almighty Parent deigned to invest
With particles material the vast
And infinite concave, and plant in space
A noble garden, worthy of Himself,
Whose plots are systems, and whose flowers are orbs.
For He whom all the Heaven could not contain,
Nor Heaven of Heavens,—He who doth Himself
Pervade Infinity,—did not disdain
To share His empire with created things

* Genesis i. 1.

Formed of mere matter ; and while yet He ruled
Obedient Seraphim, and held in sway
Subject Archangels, found for fresh employ
To tend a Universe and foster Worlds.
Nor boots it thou should'st trace by what slow steps
The first conceived and impalpable sphere
Of Earth acquired its substance ; but thine eyes
Shall see the direful pageant of a world
Chaotic and confused, whose elements
In fierce contention and in hideous strife
Immixed, fling forth defiance to the Heavens,
Which unforgetting, seems to have forgot
Their riotous existence. Yet the laws
Of Great Jehovah sleep not, though they pass
Through death to their fulfilment,—but from ill
Apparent and unmingled work out Good.
Mortal ! what seest thou ? ”

Straightway my sight
Restored, found full employ and wondrous use,
Endowed with power not mortal ;—and I cried :—
“ I see a world, yet not a world ! * for this
Hath not a semblance of the goodly things
I view around me waking ;—yea, I see

* *Κόσμος, ὃν δὲ κόσμητος (ἄκοσμος)*, “without form.”—See Genesis i. 2.

An earth, and yet no earth,—for all its vast
Horizon is defaced by sweltering waves
And turbid billows, seething like a huge
Infernal caldron, from whose scorching breath
The murky sky shrinks not, but close enwraps,
As doth a shroud the dead. Nor could mine eyes
Have aught descried, but that a spirit's sight
Hath quickened them ; for all the steaming sea
Is clothed in outer blackness, solid, palpable ;
And not a ray of heavenly Light reveals
The racked and tortured globe, which 'neath a pall
Of screening darkness * hides its agonies.
Nor which is earth, which sky,—nor which the sea,
Which cloud, can be discerned,—for all the earth
And sea and sky in dire confusion mixed,
With shriek and roar and hiss hurl themselves forth
Each against other with insensate rage
And savage fury. The impendent floods,
Upborne in fuming vapours, canopy
With folds voluminous and zones compact
The parent waters, till their even poise
Failing, the mighty drops accumulate
And headlong dash themselves like cataracts

* Genesis i. 2.

Into the swarthy waves. The writhing air,
Less air than smoke of nethermost pit, careers
In eddying whirlwinds, sweeping o'er the deep,
And sucks the ebullient seas until they mix
Their sulphurous components, and with wails
And screams reseek their native hell
In horrid waterspouts. Consuming fire
And quenching waters, like two champions fell
Armed for the strife, antagonist for death,
Wrestle in direful combat, each in might
No less than other, and in supernal force
Each peerless ;—nor can my unaided sense
To either give the palm, for now is one
Supreme in mastery, yet even while
Seeming omnipotent, it suffereth
Instant defeat ; and each alternately
Is slave and victor. Canst thou penetrate
This mystery, and say which shall prevail ? ”

“ Yea,” answered my Instructor, “ but the powers
That here thou seest rampant, and which seem
To riot in mere lawless turbulence,
Have yet their fixed confines, and not beyond
Permitted bounds may rage ;—nor vehemence

Alone, though that of fire, can e'er subdue
The milder, gentler force of water, shed
With steadfast and perpetual energy,
Deliberate but overwhelming. Be assured
The waters shall prevail. But hast thou told
All that thou seest ? ”

“ E'en not the lesser half ! ”

Eager I answered ; for my faculties
Were wrapped in new amazement ; — “ unknown pangs
Each moment rend the earth, and spectacles
I dare not look on,—for they fill my soul
With unaccustomed dread. The pitchy cloud
Which, like an incubus, broods o'er the wild
And restless ocean, forfeits for a space
Its awful blackness, and a lurid blaze
More terrible than darkness, quivers o'er
My dazzled sight, and cleaves the solid air
As with a sword of flame, whose ghastly light
Glares on the abyss, and suddenly unbares
All its horrific ruin,—then as swift
Evanishing, restores primæval Night.
And ere my riven eyeballs may resume
Their wonted potency, the mighty crash
Of thunder bursts upon my startled ears

With hideous peals which shock the elements,
Affrighting Nature, as with sullen roll
Reverberate, they echo from the depths,
Like to the knell of doom.

Nor this alone—

For far below, where the tempestuous waves
With bubbling rage toss up their foaming crests
Like maddened steeds, and ever and anon
Leap, as with keener torture, with a bound
E'en higher than their wont,—a sudden gleam
Of flaming incandescence cleaves the deep,
Which, vanquished for an interval, falls back
With yells of baffled fury, and a hiss,—
As though a monstrous myriad-throated snake,
Roused from his lair, had oped his bristling jaws
Threatening destruction,—greeted the intruding bulk
Of scorching splendour, whose half liquid mass
Swiftly augmenting, flows in fiery rills
Adown its plastic sides. The swelling slope
Receives new stature from the exhaustless springs
Of hidden conflagration, and ascends
With strides unequal, as the glowing tide
Flows with uneven pulse, or ebbs,—like waves
Of harmless water, yet which never

Nor metal, e'er so keenly tempered, might
Withstand unmolten ;—but in one confused
Compounded fluid fire amalgamate,
Dazzles the darkness, and new horrors adds
To the infernal picture. But ere long
The blazing mass subsides,—the shrieking waves
Lick its collapsing base and minished bounds,
Nor cease until beneath the conquering flood
It lies once more engulfed. More that remains
I may not see ;—for now my aching eyes
Grow dazed, and mine assaulted ears no more
Can mark the din and clangor of the racked
And battling elements. Afford, I pray,
A breathing-space, and of thy courtesy
Declare this marvel, what it may portend.”

“Yea, willingly,” the Archangel replied,
“Do I expound the mystery which thus
Enchained thine eyes and ears, and thrall'd thy sense.
O Man ! thou hast seen Chaos !—thou hast been
A witness of the time when all the Earth
Was void* and shapeless,—when the incursive deep
Was clothed with darkness as a garment,—when

* Genesis i. 2.

The world was dead, and yet no sepulchre,—
For yet no thing of breathing life had moved
Upon its changing surface, nor had cleaved
Its seething ocean, nor disported in
Its dusky firmament ;—was formless,—yet,
Through travail and convulsive throes, and purged
By fiery ordeal, stretched forth its hands
To grasp its future loveliness, and seize
Its ultimate adornment,—passively
Obedient to laws immutable
And changeless ordinances, which should make
Chaos a Paradise, and should evolve
From seeming mere discordant elements
A populous Eden.”

While he yet discoursed,
A thought arose unbidden in my soul
Which thus found words :—“ If such as I might dare
To invade thy utterance, fain would I enquire,
Since thou of fullest knowledge hast declared
The groaning world unfolded to my gaze
To be uncharged with life,—untenanted
In earth, or sea, or sky, by thing of breath
Inspired divinely ;— what may have foreshown
The wondrous dove-like Shape which seemed to brood

Upon the watery desert, hovering
With lambent, flickering light above the waste,
Unharm'd and unextinguish'd ? yea, methought
The foaming surges oft-times would have quenched
Its pale yet glowing presence,—oft I deemed
The struggling waters had engulfed it, or
The madly whirling winds would dissipate
Its seeming feeble rays ;—yet as I gazed,
It gleamed from out the billows like a star,
More lustrous than erenow. The mighty rage
Of fiery hurricanes was impotent
To dim its mystic sheen, and e'en the glare
Of withering lightning which obscured the sight
Of aught else for a space, diminished not
Its marvellous radiance ;—still it shone serene
Amid the fiercest conflict, and mine eyes
Sought it as one might seek deliverance
Amid the elemental scenes of dread,—
And never sought in vain. Of what import
Believest thou was this mysterious light,
If not a thing of Life ?”

Thus I arraigned
My great Interpreter,—who straight replied ;—
“ Of Life, thou sayest truly,—but of Life

Nor mortal, nor of earth,—but of a mould
Divine and immaterial ; for that
Thou saw'st, and deem'dst perchance to shadow forth
A life primæval upon earth, was e'en
The Holy Spirit of God,* which brooded o'er
The antique world, to regulate and guide,
Direct, control, and govern the brute force
Of senseless matter,—to adjust its bounds,
Restrain its turbulence, and point the laws
Which hold it in obedience ;—nor less,
When strife shall cease to rage, and tardy peace
Shall be declared where now fierce war is waged,
To invest the dead material particles,
Evenly poised, with properties divine,
And power to build new structures, and contrive
An architecture more complex than e'en
The loveliest and most irradiant gem
That sparkles in earth's caverns ;—to construct
An organism frail and delicate,
Henceforth to be the meet receptacle
Of Life divinely breathed,—the Spirit's gift,—
Holy, eternal, god-like, wonderful,
As is Himself.

* Genesis i. 2.

“ But now once more address
Thy gaze to earth ; for it behoves that thou
Should'st testify its varying aspect,
Mark its advancing order ;—and fear not
That scenes of terror and affright, as those
Which late afflicted thee, shall vex thy sight.
For each succeeding vision that shall hold
Thee rapt in transport, shall present the earth
Less troubled and unquiet than erewhile,
And ever tending to the perfectness
That now is throned thereon. For once
Order established, Heaven's rule on Earth,
Chaos may ne'er return, nor disarray
O'erwhelm the elements,*—but, from what was late
Confusion deemed, when all was restless change
And pauseless tumult, issues finally
Impressive grandeur, when stability
Has banished fickleness,—and scenes sublime,
When rest succeeds to turmoil.

For anon
Shall be discovered how the black abyss,
Which seemed at first the very womb of Night,
Received illumination ; and began

* Genesis viii. 22.

To struggle with obscurity, and wrest
From death and darkness life-bestowing Light ;—
Submissive to the Omnipotent behest
Of Him whom darkness and whom light alike
Hear and obey. Direct thy heedful sight
Earthwards, and listen with attentive ear,
As to the mighty prologue, which erewhile
Enchained thy senses.”

Thus again adjured,
With eye and ear regardful equally,
I gazed upon the impenetrable veil
Which hid the lowering earth ;—for now mine eyes
Unhelped could scan no more the fierce discord
Which late appalled them. Like a winding-sheet
The thick and solid vapours spread abroad,
Enveloping the new-created world
In clouds of death-like gloom, forbidding aught
To be disclosed of watery violence
Or fiery passion wreaked beneath the pall
Of visible darkness, which had brooded o’er
The strife since Time began:

Then suddenly,
In tones which fell upon my straining ear
As from a battle-trumpet, the command,

"LET THERE BE LIGHT!" *

rang through the arching vault
Of far-resounding Heaven ; Jehovah's voice
In all its majesty ! Straightway the swart
And aged Midnight, which had reigned supreme,
Sole partner of Earth's throes and agonies
Since their original, heard the behest
And fled,—and Light upsprung, and cast athwart
The patient world its long deferred beams,
Softly uplifting, as with gentle hands,
Its veil of mystery, and solacing
The suffering globe, whose struggling woes henceforth,
Near overpast, and travails perfected,
Might bear espial. Slow the genial dawn
Spread o'er the landscape, bathing the abyss
As with a virgin flood ; and every wave
Leaped with a gladdened bound as welcoming
The new-discovered boon ;—each lonely rock
Which reared its scathed crest above the waste,
Peered through the glimmer like a silent ghost
Raised into life, as by the tender beam
Kissed maidenly, and by the kiss disclosed
And one by one made evident. As when

* Genesis i. 3.

Upon some outpost of a campéd plain,
At distant intervals a sentinel
Keeps solitary guard, and through the long
And starless hours of night stands vigilant,
Invisible, until the earliest gray
Of pallid dawn discovers him afar,
Watchful and mute, erect and motionless.

But yet no radiant Sun appeared,—nor yet
Was any fount discovered whence the light
Which stole adown the cloudy canopy
Might emanate ;—nor was the grateful beam
Lustrous and dazzling, but subdued and faint,
Like to an arctic dawn, which tardily
Expels the long protracted night, the day's
Thrice-welcome harbinger. Slow in the East
The soft and feeble Heaven-sent ray, which all
The vaporous mists of earth and nebulous fogs
Enveloping no more had power to quench,
Arose, diffusing genial influence,—
Traversed the ocean desert, in whose womb
Life's rudiments awoke,* roused by the touch
Of the celestial emanation, sent,

* *Eozon*, &c.

The first of gifts from God to His new world.
The turbid waves, earth-laden, bore the ray,
Exulting, forth from its original East
Across the expanse, till in the fading West
It sought repose. There resting for the space
Of one short hour-computed night, the morn
Saw its new love restored, nor ever more
Henceforth to leave the solitary world
Forlorn and desolate ; but in the years
Countless succeeding, to roll evenly
Poised betwixt light and dark. For God, who saw
The ethereal influence o'erspread the deep
At His behest, and by Whose sovereign will
The subtle essence lent vivific force
And animating power to elements
Prepared to give them welcome, and to frame
Fit temples to enshrine them,—was content
With His endowment, and declared the Light
To be a general good ;—the Darkness He
Partitioned from it,* and appointed each
Its own beneficent divided reign,—
This for activity, and that for rest :—
Then to the Light He gave the name of Day,

* Genesis i. 4.

The Darkness called he Night.*

And as the first

Of the long line of sunless days declined
And faded into gloom, methought I woke
As from a dream ;—and lo ! the placid earth
Lay smiling at my feet, and bore no sign
Of the fierce struggles which erewhile oppressed
My daunted sight. Where late the fiery flood
Wrestled at deadly feud with hissing waves,
Which should be vanquished,—there a vale serene
And pleasant, varying with rill and wood
Lay 'neath the laughing sunlight ; and I gazed
Long time, and mused upon the mystery
Which in a trance had occupied my soul,
And taught me Earth's beginning. For meseemed
Morning had dawned again, and, with the eve
Which shaded late into primæval gloom,
Enframed the wondrous story of a Day†
Of God's creative work,—the first, which like
A brief watch in the night had passed away,—
Yet in its wondrous record had displayed
The tale of ages in a turning sand !

* Genesis i. 5.

† Genesis i. 5.

BOOK II.

THE ARGUMENT.

The evening of the second day. The Archangel interprets the first day's work, and directs attention to the coming change. The firmament commanded to appear, and the waters above are divided from the waters beneath. The aspect of the universal sea. The morning breaks, and concludes the second day's work.

Anon the darkness gathered, and I knew
My brief respite was ended ;—for the trance
Fell on me dream-like, while my waking thoughts
And musings faded into eagerly
Aspiring hopes, and mute expectancy
Of what should next betide ; nor knew I yet
If my corporeal frame possessed me, or
My spirit wandered free and unrestrained
By wonted bands of earth, but that I saw
My great and affable companion stand
At my right hand, and smile, as welcoming
His willing neophyte to enter in

His secret chamber, tapestried with all
The pageant of Creation, pictured forth
In mystic imagery. And awhile
Reigned awful silence, which I dared not first
Too rashly break :—nor haply had I need,—
For thus the Archangel suddenly addressed
His willing listener :—

“ Hast thou recognized,
O Man, Jehovah’s voice, which through the clouds
And thick embracing mists has pierced to earth,
Rending the veil from off the unseen face
Of ancient Night,—and with resistless word
Banishing darkness, whose assured domain
Chaos has yielded since the first conceived
Creative thought ? Yea hast thou heard Him speak
Whom all the heavenly powers reverence ;
And thou hast witnessed how the Light upsprung
Obedient at His Word, baptizing earth
With a new essence, peerless and divine ;
Which thrilled all Nature with a subtle strength,
And added vigour to each element
Erewhile in darkness struggling, objectless,
But now regenerate.

Behold that Light

Gaining new lustre, and more perfectly
Flooding the dusky landscape ; and await
The utterance of God, which swift shall chase
From off the surface of the gloomy sea
Its cloudy envelope, and purify
The ambient sphere of vapours, which yet sheathes
The renovated world. I charge thee now
Attend and listen !”

Then did I address
Myself to mark the changing spectacle
Imaged before my sight ; and lo ! the Earth
Enshrouded as e'en now with obscure gloom
And native mists, through which the firstborn Light
Pierced subtilely, revealing all the waste
Of the life-fostering sea, o'er which the shape
Of the inextinguishable and divine
Eternal Spirit brooded lovingly.
Nor could aught clearly be discerned of earth
Through the impendent clouds, which close enwrap
The shallow steaming ocean ; and I strained
My aching sight, as though it might perchance
Descry the solid world behind the veil,
Or glimpse the newly lighted occupant
Of this vast canopy ;—nor less my ears

Listed attent for the divine behest
Which should expel the noxious envelope
Enshrouding the abyss.

Then suddenly,
Like to the roll of thunder from a black
And lightning-dazzled cloud, broke forth the voice
Of the Invisible, saying :—

“LET THERE BE
A FIRMAMENT BETWEEN THE SEA AND SKY,
DIVIDING CLOUD FROM OCEAN !”*

and behold,
Or yet the muttering echo died away
Like the last whispers of the hurricane
Through the wind's secret caverns, the command
Found straight fulfilment, and swift consequence,—
Purged the dense earthy vapours, and distilled
From out the stifling lurid atmosphere
A soft transparent ether, crystal-clear,
Akin to that celestial sphere, wherein
Are fixed the bright-eyed stars ;—a firmament
Charged with the breath of life, through which the light,
Late born, strode with elastic spring, as though
Invigorate and refreshed,—revealing all

* Genesis i. 6.

The plastic workmanship of earth, as through
A heavenly casement ;—and the liquid air
Anew refreshed the young unfinished world,
So lately bathed in the serener flood
Of light ethereal. Then saw I the sea
Rolling its steaming and yet heated waves,
Laden with fertile continents, and charged
With future lands and clustering islets, nursed
In the thick yellow waters, midst whose slime
Crawled Nature's first-born creatures,—shapes
unknown

And forms of antique novelty,—the first
Precursors of the teeming multitudes
Engendered in old Ocean, and concealed
Invisible beneath the ample swell
Of its all-nurturing bosom.

And the surge
Was shoreless, save for peering rocks and tops
Of high primæval mountains, whose rough crests
And serried pinnacles pierced through the tide,
Discovering where the strong rebellious Earth,
Rent with unwonted throes, had first cast off
The mantle of the sea. High o'er the waste
Of ocean, arching in the vaulted sky,

The lesser sea of stored-up waters hung,*
Like the impenetrable folds of some
Great rolling curtain drawn before the sun
And hiding all his glory,—save the shorn
And struggling beams which burst the cloudy gates,
And shone with mild and temperate influence
O'er the pale landscape, gifting earth and sea
With new-found life. Still was the throbbing world[†]
Not yet at rest, nor freed from olden pains
And heaving violence,—but its tender rind
Was e'er anew distorted, and upborne
By fiery eruptions ;—nor was aught
Stable and settled, fitted for the feet
Of beasts terrestrial,—and each seared rock,
Unclothed with verdure, was untenanted
By any thing of life which yet might breathe
The viewless ornament so late bestowed
Upon the youthful earth, to decorate
Its newest lustrum,—the pure firmament
Which God called Heaven.†

E'en yet as I gazed
And pondered, grey and sunless eve drew on,
And, with the fading beam, my spirit woke

* Genesis i. 7.

† Genesis i. 8.

To skies, and cloudless air, and light refined
And purified ;—and morn methought had dawned
On my material faculties, to paint
With vivid natural hues the difference
'Twixt earth young, and mature,—betwixt the pale
And feeble ray struggling through cloud and mist,
And the full glorious golden sunlight ;—'twixt
The void unfurnished islets lately sprung
From the abyss, and scarce discerned above
Its vast expansive bosom,—and the wide
And far-extending flower-bespangled fields,
The verdant hills aglow with purple light,
And the dark woods. And with the morn I knew
The second great creative ordinance
Accomplished ; and the second mystic day,*
Fraught with its wondrous import, perfected
In its late-pictured image, as long since
Each pregnant circumstance had been fulfilled
In prototypal verity.

* Genesis i. 8.

BOOK III.

THE ARGUMENT.

The evening of the third day closes in. The Archangel interprets the work of the second day, and directs the Seer's attention to the coming change. The command for the creation of dry land is heard. The aspect of the newly-formed land. The Archangel interprets the new creation, and shews that it must first be occupied by plants only.

The command given for the creation of herbs and trees. Its fulfilment. The Seer beholds the vision of a primæval forest—its interior—its ghostly solitude,—its grandeur,—its vaporous atmosphere. The Archangel interprets the vision. The morning dawns, and the third day's work is ended.

BUT ere

The lengthened shadows fell athwart the fields,
My sun had set, and night fell on mine eyes,
Leaving my soul illuminate ; prepared
To see new marvels, and to hear renewed
The tale of His achievements, who from waste
And desolation had called forth the new
Regenerate earth, and bright pellucid air

Adorned with sourceless light, and had inspired
His pristine creatures with His noblest gift
Of Life. Then did I with expectancy
Direct mine eyes to him who yet stood near
As waiting my return, and from whose mouth
I longed to hear the sequence of the change
Which drove the billows to their strict confines,
And clothed the solid earth with verdancy.
Nor long desired in vain :—for, as the wish
Found birth, my great Instructor thus took up
His noble theme :—

“ Now is fulfilled the prime
And wondrous task, which no Intelligence,
Save only the Divine, might contemplate ;—
To endue the brutish and revolving Earth
With a twin mantle charged with Light and Breath,
Within whose genial folds the rudiments
Of ceaseless, restless, ever-changing Life
May find at once a root and sustenance.
First in the teeming Ocean, which invests
The solid globe, whose water-veiléd crust
Lies deep concealed, save where at intervals
A scathéd crag has conquered the abyss,
And raised its proud and barren crest on high

Above the pristine flood ; whereon no blade
Of friendly moss or hoary lichen yet
Has dared to cling and vegetate,—nor e'en
The smallest animalcule, earth-sustained,
Has found a resting-place. But yet anon
Shalt thou be witness of the victory
The stubborn-seeming Earth shall slowly wrest
From the tumultuous waters,—as a man
Conquers an untamed steed, whose curvetings
And restless tossings of his unyoked head
Spurn for a time the inevitable stroke
Which shall in fine o'ermaster, and henceforth
Restrain in bounds the savage ecstasy
Of his insensate fury.

Cast thine eyes

Once more athwart this general sea, and mark
The baffled waves retire obedient
To the divine behest, whose thunderous voice
Thou ere long shalt discern above the roar
Of lashing billows.—Listen, and attend ! ”

Thus counselled did I, with erected ear,
And straining eyeball, watch the impending change,
And wait the unknown event. Awhile I scanned

The universal ocean, on whose breast
No argosy might sail, nor helm might cleave
That primitive and olden wilderness.
And as I numbered the infrequent crests
Of blanched or blackened rocks which pierced the air
And bid defiance to the eddying waves,
A voice o'ertook my sense, and every pulse
Thrilled as I listened :—

“ LET THE WATERS ALL
BENEATH THE HEAVENS BE GATHERED IN ONE PLACE,
AND LET DRY LAND APPEAR ! ”*

And ere the roll
Died muttering through the firmament, affright-
Seized on the troublous waves, and hurled them back
To narrower confines, with mighty hand
Piling up oceans, and encircling each
With new-born island-belts, and upraised lands,
Foreshadowing the mighty continents
And solid plains of wide terrestrial earth
Of yet far-distant ages. Then the Power
Whose voice had raised it into being, called
The dry land, Earth,—the gathered waters He
Called Seas ;—and surveying His newest work,

* Genesis i. 9.

God saw that it was Good.*

Then could I mark
The changeless aspect of the shoreless Sea
And waste monotony of dreary waves,—
Unbroken since the day when Light upsprung,—
Bear on its joyless bosom native Earth,
Which should hereafter coruscate like gems
With the rich verdancy and golden tints
Of bounteous, illimitable life ;
And weave around exhausted Nature's breast,
For her long agony, a girdle decked
With emeralds and gold.

But over all
These desert islets solemn stillness reigned
And deathlike silence,—for my wondering eyes
Yet were not opened to discern their mean
And simple tenants ;—nor to trace the forms
Grotesque and primitive of earliest plants †
Which stored these antique nurseries, the young
Precursors of the noble forest race
Which clothed the slopes of Paradise.

Then turned
My looks inquiringly upon my Guide,

* Gen. i. 10.

† *Fucoids, Psilophyton, Zosterites, &c.*

And my regards unknowingly appealed
For knowledge to illumine me,—nor in vain ;—
For reading through mine eyes mine inmost soul,
The august Interpreter straight broke the spell
Of silence fallen round me,—and thus spoke :—

“ Now is the reign of mere material Night
Passed by, ne’er to return ; and from henceforth
The hallowed and divinest gift of Life
No more shall hide its bright and jewelled head
Deep in the darkling caves of ocean, nor
Limit its lowly creeping citizens
To turbid waters and defiling waves,
Where, mid the slime and mud of future lands,
They crawl in noisome pools, or dank recess
Of mire-distilling caverns,—where no eye
May see their forms of beauty, nor may mark
Their progress to perfection. Yea, henceforth
A grander temple and a higher throne
Is consecrated to a nobler race
Of creatures animate ;—and this new earth,
Just wrested from the ancient dominance
Of universal and primæval sea,
Shall be the theatre and wondrous scene

Of never-ending beings, ever new,—
Which shall for countless ages celebrate
The exhaustless treasures of the Infinite,
And His devices, multitudinous,
Immeasurable, boundless, limitless,
As is Himself.

But first the lowly herb
And humble plant must claim the infant waste,
And tapestry this desert with the green
And tender verdure which may most befit
The life of coming races ;—and for long
And untold generations must these lands
Be subject to the unintelligent
Scarce animate dominion of untrod
And tangled forests. E'en prepare thyself
To hear Jehovah's fiat, and to view
The impending act which shall conceal the earth
As with a verdant mantle, and convert
Its sterile nakedness to luxury
Of foliage, and exuberance of green."

Then did I travel with expectant glance
Across the transient scene, o'er which so soon
The mighty working of creative Will

Would set its wondrous seal, transfiguring
The desert spaces, and enrobing all
The new-born isles. And my attentive ear
Was strained well nigh to bursting,—now with fear,
Anon with trembling hope, to hear the tones
Of that o'erwhelming voice re-echoing
Through the dim firmament, whose pregnant words
Kept pace with their fulfilment. Then it spoke :—

“LET THE EARTH BRING FORTH GRASS, AND EVERY HERB
THAT YIELDETH SEED, WHOSE SEED IS IN ITSELF
UPON THE EARTH !” *

And straightway there sprang up
Both tender grass and rank, and every kind
Of Herb and Tree †; and every sea-spared land,
Like to the sudden chances of a dream,
Was tenanted and peopled with a vast
Concourse of rugged trunks and moss-grown stems
Spreading forth myriad leafy sprays, whose hue
Tinted the landscape. And I saw each isle
Laden with compact forests which o'erspread
The land as with a curtain richly dight
With rough embroidery of thickest green,
From whose indented borders, sea-begirt,

* Genesis i. 11.

† Genesis i. 12.

Hung many a drooping fringe and quaint festoon,
And many a wreath grotesque and fanciful,*
Now falling gracefully across the marsh,
Now spiring high aloft. Anon meseemed
My Heaven-guided feet drew near to where
Twined thousand delicate and graceful stems,
Whose branches interwoven with wondrous curves
And marvellous interlacements, seemed most like
Some cunning needlework or tapestry
Devised by hands not mortal.†

Then I saw

A noble vista opening far within,
Like to the high-arched vaulted aisle of some
Vast fallen temple ; for the earth was strewed
With ruined trunks which cumbered all the ground
Like shivered columns tossed confusedly
In most sublime disorder,—some prostrate
On her supporting bosom, half concealed,
By lesser herbs and humbler plants o'ergrown ;—
And some long since decayed, still lifting up
Their proud and leafless crests among their peers,
Upborne upon the mouldering skeletons

* *Hymenophyllites*, *Sphenopteris*, *Pecopteris*, and other herbaceous ferns.

† *Asterophyllites*, *Sphenophyllum*, and *Equisetites*, &c.

Of long past generations. And the ground
Was thick bestrown with golden wealth of leaves
And off-torn branches from the vaulted bowers,
Which lent their fertilizing influence
To people future forests.

But above

This tangled ruin towered into the air
Trees slender and gigantic ;—monarch boles
That shot aloft into the mazy roof,*
And blended their eternal verdure with
The overarching bowers ;—noble trunks
All ribbed and seamed and marked with many a scar,†
In wondrous pattern and in strange device,—
Whose unfamiliar shapes and antique forms
Surprised my curious eyes ;—and stately shafts
Of tall and sturdy forest citizens
Rising in branchless beauty to the skies
With perfect symmetry, and crowned on high
With feathery tufts and fronds.‡

Yet did the grim

And bristling foliage, scarce visible
Beneath the sombre and funereal shade,

* *Lomatophlojos*, *Lepidodendron carinatum*, &c.

† *Lepidodendra*, *Sigillariæ*, *Favulariæ*, &c.

‡ *Arborescent ferns*.

Fill me with shuddering awe, as I descried
Far in the dark perspective giant plumes
Which spread themselves abroad and canopied
Some forest monster, brooding solemnly,
Like an enchanted sentinel, about
Whose stately rooted form weird figures rose,
And seemed to throw aloft their spectral arms
In attitudes of frenzy ;*—and around
Clustered gaunt shapes in closely serried ranks,
Whose ghostly presence and aspect had been
For countless centuries the fitting guard
Of these deserted solitudes,—where reigned
Eternal stillness and perpetual hush,
Unbroken by the piping melody
Of any bird,—nor snapped the tiniest twig
Beneath the rustling footstep of the least
Small woodland creature. For these infinite
Majestic shades were pathless, desolate,
Unpeopled ;—nor as yet did any sound
Break the mysterious calm ;—save only when
Some regal trunk, whose high erected crest
Had braved the changeless round of centuries,

* Compare *Lepidodendron Sternbergii*. (See restoration by M. Eugène Deslongchamps.)

Bowed to its fall, and with an echoing crash
Topped down headlong ; in the mighty rush
Of its vast mass involving humbler plants
In one great common ruin.

Nor had I

Upon the slopes of Lebanon e'er seen
Forms such as here arrested my regard
Of strange diversity,—such wondrous shapes
As might beseem the endless fantasies
Of some uneasy dream, far rather than
The verity of Nature. Nor was aught
Of richest woodland worthy to compare
With such exuberance of teeming life,
Befitting a forgotten age, when all
The Earth was but a wilderness of trees
And vegetation, whose rank foliage
Ran into leafy riot.

And o'er all

Brooded an atmosphere of vaporous cloud
Such as nor beast nor bird might breathe and live.
For all the air was lowering and dim
With exhalations poisonous to all
That breathes or moves ; but to the rooted life
Rich in all floating sustenance which yields

Or leaf or wood, and every element
Their structures need. And He who called them forth
Poured down continuous showers, watering them
With fertilizing rains and heated mists ;
And fostered them with an unwonted warmth,
While yet no Sun shot forth his cheering beams
Adown the steaming firmament, but light
Subdued and soft, shorn of its radiance,
And likest to a lowering summer's dawn,
Whose clouded gloom transmits a struggling ray
Of feeble sickly light, illumining
The dull, uncoloured landscape, which appears
In melancholy dress and sombre array
To mourn its veiled glory.

Then I looked
Towards my great Conductor, if perchance
Aught might be more revealed, which sight alone,
Unaided, could not note ; and my brief glance
Met swift response :—" Yea, hast thou not in vain
Turned on me thy regards, but hast divined
Some parable hid in the wondrous scenes
Displayed before thee ; for these twilight glades,
These dusky swamps and leafy solitudes,
These wooded wildernesses, and these huge

And monstrous trunks which claim the desert Earth,
Devoid of moving creatures, save the few
Thy faculties may not perceive,—shoot forth
Age after age where no created thing
May marvel o'er their rank luxuriance,
No intellect admire their matchless forms,
Nor any being curiously watch
Their wondrous growth from infancy to age,
Their swift uprising or their slow decay.
Yet do they all with silent energy
Fulfil their destiny, and live their life
Not objectless, each supplementing each
In due proportion ;—nor the less do all
Die their appointed death, and every one
Transmits his chemic labour to the vast
And general stock. Each dead and fallen stem
Buries its dead, and each evanishes
But for a space,—and in a future age
Shall rise again ; no more condemned to waste
Its grandeur in umbrageous solitudes
And darkling deserts, but perchance to yield
Solace and comfort, or to hold a torch
To human science, by whose timely aid
Thy race may lift itself above the Earth,

And learn by striving to become as Gods
In knowledge as in deeds. Yea, and all these
Unconscious forests which o'erspread the isles,
Like green oases in the pathless sea,
Shall sink entombed within the bounteous Earth,
And be for countless ages lost to view,
Like thine own dead, forgotten and unknown,
Embalmed by Nature's hand,—till Man himself,
O'ermastering Nature, shall with curious art
Pry out their hidden secrets, and disclose
Their subterranean abodes, and wrench
The rocks from off their ancient sepulchres,—
Revealing to a populous, busy world
The bounteous gifts of Heaven. And God, who caused
These trees to flourish, and who clothed the Earth
With shrubs and herbs, and who appointed them
Their future use, surveyed His latest work
And saw that it was good." *

Then, as the words
Of the Archangel died upon my ear,
The vision languished on my sense ; and like
An unsubstantial phantasy, dissolved
Into mere nothingness ; and in its stead

* Genesis i. 12.

My waking eyes discerned the gorgeous sun
Spreading its golden wings athwart the vale,
Tinting the landscape with its goodly light,
And decking every green and wooded slope
With chequered brilliancy, and vivid dyes
Most unlike to the sombre spectral hues
Which tinged the primal forests.

Then I knew
The third day's work* accomplished and fulfilled,
And the great drama of Creation half
Completed, whose each noble act excelled
Its marvellous precursor,—step by step
Advancing to perfection, furnishing
The Earth with habitants, and framing each
In mould befitting every time and place
And circumstance of being.

* Genesis i. 13.

BOOK IV.



THE ARGUMENT.

The evening of the fourth day. Preparation for the creation of the Sun. The Seer hears the command given for the creation of the Sun and Moon. He sees the vision of the Sun first breaking through the mists and shining upon the Earth. Sunlight and Sunset. The Moon appears in the heavens accompanied by the host of Stars. The Archangel interprets the vision, and the breaking of morning announces the fourth day's work accomplished.

LONG I stood

Wrapt in abstraction, meditating o'er
The shadowy pageant which so late had left
Its impress on my faculties ; and long
I pondered on the pregnant words with which
My heavenly guide had told the wondrous tale
Of the first youthful vesture which had been
Earth's primal ornament, long since put off,—
Like to an antique stuff which has outlived

The fashion of its form, whose costliness
Of fabric and material destines it
For future nobler uses. And I knew
Long time was not accorded to the past
For contemplation, but that soon my guide
Would claim my thoughts for new imaginings
And all-engrossing scenes of wonderment
Surpassing the fulfilled. And then by slow
And subtle steps, the late-instructed soul,
O'erpowered by expectation, lost its grasp
Of the revealed, and sought to penetrate
The yet unknown ; and as the half-formed wish
Found mental utterance, the darkness fell
O'er my corporeal eyes, excluding sights
And sounds of present urgency. And ere
The casements of my soul were lifted up
To admit new mystic light, I heard again
The noble voice of him, who, statue-like,
Stood ever at my side, re-opening
The epic argument :—

“ Henceforth, O Man !

No longer shall the firmament be veiled
In unpurged exhalations, which enchain
The lightsome æther to the solid earth

In an unwilling fellowship, by bonds
Of mist and vapour,—but the crystal air,
By its inherent virtue clear and bright,
Like an alembic straightway shall distil
The beams which heretofore have struggled through
Earth's cloudy curtain ; and the long-concealed
Majestic source whence all effulgence springs,
Whose glory has been shorn by barriers
Of thick impenetrable humours, shall
Unveiled disclose his presence. For the time
Draws near apace when thou shalt hear the voice
Of the supreme all-glorious Sun of Heaven
Give his commission to the sun of Earth,—
His dim reflection here,—to shine upon
This nether world, to feed with light and life
His mortal creatures.”

Then I fortified
My soul to listen to the searching tones
Of the Eternal Arbiter, whose words
Stirred the material Universe, and whose
Mere utterance engendered consequence
Instant of mighty deeds. Nor long suspense
Was granted, but with awful rushing sound,
Like to the roar of many waters driven

By a tornado's breath, the summons came :—

“LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN HEAVEN'S FIRMAMENT
DIVIDING DAY FROM NIGHT ; AND LET THEM BE
FOR SIGNS AND SEASONS, AND FOR DAYS AND YEARS ;
AND LET THEM BE FOR LIGHTS IN HEAVEN ABOVE
TO GIVE LIGHT ON THE EARTH !” *

And so it was :—

For God made two great Lights, the greater Light
To rule the Day—the less to rule the Night ;
And all the host of stars.†

Then first a rift,

Cleft in the cloudy firmament, revealed
The azure of God's throne, through which the beams
Of the rich mellow sunlight overflowed
Like the outpourings of a generous wine
From some o'erbrimming goblet ; and the ray
Leaped on the new-found earth, and kissed the sea
And every wooded isle, and with the kiss
Took new possession. And the pendent mists,
So dense erewhile, became attenuate,
And, like a dream, dissolved before the strength
And might resistless of the golden shafts
Of the great Orb of Day. Each barrier

* Genesis i. 14, 15.

† Genesis i. 16.

Was rolled up like a curtain, and each screen
Of intercepting darkness was dispelled,
Like wreaths of circling smoke, to nothingness,
And vanished at his presence. Then a flood
Of radiant light fell softly on the Earth,
And, like a thought-illuminated face, it changed
With sudden bound its dull uncoloured hue
For a bright smile of welcome. As when one
Borne down with sorrows and oppressed with griefs,
Raising his joyless eyes, meets suddenly
A potent friend's benevolent regards,
And knows his suffering ended,—banishing
His looks of sadness, and o'erspreading all
His countenance with smiles of happiness
And conscious joy ;—so did the laughing ray
Spring on the face of Nature, and transformed
All that it touched to gold.

And as it fell
From Heaven to Earth, forth burst the mighty Sun,
Disclosed in all his glorious majesty
And pomp of matchless splendour,—the sole spot
Upon the empyrean blue, o'er which he seemed
To roam a master, and to rule a lord.*

* Genesis i. 17.

Nor did returning clouds diminish aught
Of his magnificence, but each received
A regal gift of hues celestial,—
Ethereal tints of purple and of gold,
Crimson and saffron, amethyst and verde,—
Sweeping around like gorgeous oriflammes,
And trains of banners floating in the sky,
Dyed with his cognizance. And when he sank
From the high Heaven at eve, to couch himself
On ocean's bosom, he baptized the sea
With living glory, bathing all the main
As in a radiant flood ; and every cloud
Encompassing, like servants round their Lord,
Arrayed in robes of many-coloured flame,
Flashed with the ever-changing brilliancy
Of fiery opals, as they pillowed him
Softly upon the waves.

And as his head
Like ruddy gold was lapped beneath the tide,
And ruby-tinted cloudlets bore aloft
His earliest dreams, the calm and placid face
Of night's pale Queen ascended in the East,
Silvering the mountains with a lustrous sheen,
And shedding mild effulgence o'er the sea,

Whose every ripple danced and sported in
The unaccustomed splendour. And the clouds,
Like airy giants floating round her throne,
Cast their mysterious shadows o'er the land,
And dressed in gauzy brightness, swept along
The concave sky, majestic ;—and awhile
The heaven-dwelling, diamond-tinted stars,
Whose liquid radiance had dared to pierce
The regal beams of night, gazed proudly down
With keen cold glance from out their skyey depths
Upon the ghostly earth, on all alike
That watched in moonlight, or that slept in shade.

And as I gazed upon the beauteous scene
Grown so familiar, all my rapt regard
Seemed fixed on that primæval day, when first
The lord of Light dispelled the lurid air,
And darted down his vivifying shafts
On earth and sea ; and when his regent spouse,
Night's lesser light, first ruled the darkling hours,
And walked amid the stars like a fair queen
Amid her handmaidens ; and as my thoughts
Gained insight, the Archangel's voice addressed
My pondering spirit :—

“Henceforth is the Earth

Fit theatre for nobler beings, since
Life flows around in undiluted streams
Cased in ethereal Light. The mighty Sun,
Ruler of all below, and (under Him
Who to the Sun himself appoints his bounds)
Dispenser of all good,—the fittest sign
Image and symbol of Divinity,
Is but His creature, impressed with His seal
As His commissioned viceroy over Earth,
And almoner of His bounties ;—and the Moon,
Resplendent Victrix of the night, fulfils
By His permission, and at His command,
Her silent duties,—now a gilded skiff,
Sailing through liquid æther from the arms
Of her right-royal spouse,—and now full-orbed,
Smilingly face to face, as though she drew
From lengthening interval redoubled light
And double consolation. And the host
Of mystic stars which glimpse the Heaven beyond,
And flash on earth, as though with messages
From unapproachable and boundless plains
Of unimagined glory,—each one knows
God, its Creator, and acknowledges

Him Lord, who calleth each one by its name,
And fixeth each its own appointed place
In the Republic of the Universe.
Say then, O Man ! shall He who framed these orbs,
Sun, moon, and stars, to rule the day and night,
Not call them Good ? ” *

And when his voice had ceased
Its rich-toned utterance, I seemed to hear
Deep in my soul an echo, which proclaimed
“ Yea ! these are Good ! ”—and all my consciousness
Yearned with responsive glow to his appeal.
And long I mused, and knew not he had paused,
Nor that I was alone ;—till I descried
The cattle wandering on the mountainside,
Or herded in the vale, where yet erewhile
No tenant met my gaze ;—for I had seen
The new-created sun shine down upon
Wide-rolling seas and thicket-covered lands ;
But in his loving beams no creature basked
That couched in verdant meadows, or that cropped
The soft sweet grass, or browsed upon the leaves
Of pendent branches. Then I knew the fourth
Creative day accomplished,—evening

And morning each completed ; * and a brief
Repose afforded to my faculties
To edge them for new scenes.

* Genesis i. 19.

BOOK V.

THE ARGUMENT.

The evening of the fifth day draws on, and the Archangel prepares the Seer for the fifth day's work. The command is given for the waters to bring forth abundantly: and for the appearance of fowl. The vision of fulfilment. Aspect of the earth and of the sea at the commencement of the fifth day. The appearance of great sea-monsters. A battle in the sea described. Other great sea Reptiles appear, and the forests are haunted by great land reptiles, and loathsome flying creatures; but as yet no Birds are seen. The Archangel interprets the vision, and explains why birds have not yet appeared. The first appearance of Birds; after which the morning breaks, and ends the work of the fifth day.

BUT soon the cloud,
Furnished with mystic images of eld,
O'ershadowed me, and the fifth eve drew on,
Enchaining me with anxious marvellings
Of what new wonders should enthrall my sense
In its embrace; and as the deepening shade
Fell o'er me, veiling outer life, the form
Of the illustrious Archangel gained

Fresh immaterial brightness ; and his voice,
Like tuneful waters, sounded in mine ears,
Weaving the woof of his divine discourse
With threads of gold :—and thus methought he spoke :—

“ O thou, whose eyes alone of all mankind
Have seen the order of the Universe !—
O thou, whose favoured ears alone have heard
The counsel of Jehovah !—yet again
Prepare thy soul, and fortify thyself
To hear the tones of the Omnipotent
Cleaving the vault of Heaven,—binding up
The elements in beings new and strange,
Yet long extinct ;—and moving sea and land
From their established confines, changing each
From seeming settled order, to conform
To novel combinations of which He
Alone is Arbiter,—each more akin
To thine own earth. For now shall creatures huge
And vast disport their gross unwieldy bulk
Amid the waters ; and no more the woods
In silence shall continue desolate
And destitute of wonted habitants ;—
But every leafy forest shall resound

With whirr of soaring wings, and outcries harsh
Of feathered families. Now shalt thou see
The inexhaustible and infinite
Devices which the Master-Builder frames
Through which to achieve his finished and complete
And perfect work. List therefore to the voice
Which e'er companions action, and whose tones
The elements obey; and swift as light
Combining, each creative word convert
Into substantial deeds."

Scarce had he ceased
His adjuration, when the whole concave
Echoed with the divine command which roused
The inert particles to action,—and
Proclaimed in mighty utterance, to which
Trembling I listened :—

"LET THE WATERS BRING
FORTH EVERY MOVING CREATURE THAT HATH LIFE
ABUNDANTLY; AND LET THE WINGÉD FOWL
FLY O'ER THE FACE OF EARTH, AND IN THE EXPANSE
OF HEAVEN'S FIRMAMENT!"—*

And straightway God
Created great sea-monsters, and produced

* Genesis i. 20.

Each living creature moving in the flood
After its kind, and which the waters brought
Forth in abundance ;—and the wingéd fowl
After his kind made God upon the earth,
And saw that it was Good. And having made,
He blessed them all, and bid them multiply,
Be fruitful, and increase, and fill the seas,
And people all the waters ; and to fowls
He gave a like commandment, that they should
Replenish all the Earth.*

Then did I mark

A landscape richer far than heretofore
With rugged furniture of hills and woods,
And all the glorious features which invest
Earth with unruly beauty ; and I felt
Less stranger than erenow, since I discerned
Forms* more familiar, and a foliage less
Fantastically wild ; nor clothed in gloom
And ghostly sadness, but illuminate
With cheerful sunlight streaming from the bright
And chequered sky, which beamed on stately forms
Of Pines and Cypressess and goodly Palms,
And many a forest wonder†,—through whose boughs

* Genesis i. 21, 22.

† *Cycads, Zamites, Nilsonias, &c.*

Flew humming bees, and restless butterflies—
While gauze-winged insects* darted fitfully
O'er quiet woodland pools. But yet, methought,
I gazed with curious musing on their quaint
Presentments, and their shapes antique, which seemed
Most like the wanderings of some pleasant dream
Connecting past with present,—things unknown
With daily use and knowledge.

And the sea

Was less tumultuous; and its broad confines
No longer limitless, were fain to bear
Encroaching lands, and numerous island shores
Upon its heaving bosom, sapphire-hued,
And fringed with tender green, where, scarce disguised,
Rich meadows† waved beneath the sheltering wash
Of its protecting shallows :—while afar
The ocean surf dashed over verdant rings‡
Of rocks scarce elevate above the waves,
Enclosing tranquil pools,—as though the sea
Had taken loving gage of land, to share
Henceforth Earth's gifts in common.

Presently,

In the smooth rolling billows, there arose

* *Libellulæ* (Dragon-flies). † *Zostera, Chara*, &c. ‡ *Coral Atolls*.

A troublous new commotion,—and a form,*
Huge and unshapely, reared its monstrous bulk
Above the waves, whose horrid jaws were armed
With serried teeth, and from whose nostrils sprung
Twin founts of water :—and he glared around
With ghastly eyes, whose orbéd circle vast
Filled me with horror and amaze,—and lashed
The surging waters into bubbling foam
With restless fury,—while before him fled
Affrighted shoals of finny citizens †
Of strange aspect, all armed, and mailed, and spined ;—
Disdaining which, with swift resistless rush,
Cleaving the blue transparent main, he sped
On like an arrow, scattering the flood
On either side like brawling cataracts,—
With fell intent to where he deemed a prey
More worthy waited him. Then might I see
In flight a monster stranger far, ‡ whose black
And swan-like neck arched from his shapeless mass
Like an unsightly serpent, and his crest
Less direful than his agile foe's, was stretched

* *Ichthyosaurus*.

† Placoid (shark-like) fishes, as *Hybodus*, *Acrodus*, and Ganoids, as *Pycnodus*, *Lepidotus*.

‡ *Plesiosaurus*.

Forward in flying terror ;—but in vain,—
For with a mighty gliding plunge, the space
Minished in brief to nought 'twixt the pursued
And his pursuer, who with trenchant jaws
Seized on his supple victim ;—and anon
Their writhing forms immixed in deadly strife
Scarce might be seen amid the maddening whirl
Of angry waves, and mist of blood-stained spray
Which veiled their fearful strugglings. Brief endured
The unequal combat, and ere long the sea
Closed redly o'er the victor, and engulfed
His slaughtered quarry 'neath its treacherous
And smoothly rolling waves.

Nor these alone,

And such as these, of aspect terrible,
Haunted the billows,—but anon I saw
Huge murderous reptiles* roaming through the deep,
Masters of all by virtue of their might
And cruel fangs, and spreading far and near
Terror and desolation among all
That lived in the great waters, harmlessly,
Or lesser armed than they ;—cuirassed and mailed,
Endued with strength invincible, they scoured

* *Crocodiles, Teleosaurs ; and later, Mososaurus.*

The teeming seas with brutal ravennings
And fierce rapacity,—devouring all
Without respect that crossed their fatal path
Of death and devastation ;—yet which all
But failed to satisfy their savage appetites,
Or fill the restless cravings of their vast
Insatiable maws.

Nor was the Earth
Untenanted by creatures terrible*
And dire to look on,—to whom Behemoth
Was but a puny dwarf :—colossal shapes
Which like unwieldy giants wandered through
The olden forests, hideous and grim ;
Whose ponderous tread could shake the mighty trees
And grind the woods to powder ;—and their bulk
Was cased in triple mail, impenetrable
To any living weapon,—armour-like
On head, and breast, and back,—adown whose ridge
A serried row of horrid bristling spines†
Oft threatening stood, erected ; and their eyes
Shone with a dull ferocious glare of green
Or sickly yellow, like the fearful glance
Of some malignant serpent, to whose cold

* *Iguanodon*, *Megalosaurus*, &c.

† *Hylasosaurus*.

And slimy coils their sluggish bodies claimed
Nearest affinity. And oftentimes
The forests echoed with the clangorous strife
Of mortal combat, and the Earth was dyed
Around with stains discolouring the soil,—
Not warm and crimson like the generous tide
Which flows in noble brutes,—but black and chill
Like some envenomed stream.

But e'en than these

More foul and loathsome was the flying swarm
Of Reptiles, winged, yet featherless,—whose forms,
Like inauspicious birds, with noiseless glide
Skimmed upon leathery pinions, bat-like ; * or
As scaly dragons, † crawled athwart the trunks
Of stately trees,—then spread their wings in air
And softly fell to earth, and as they fell
Seized their ignoble prey. For such as these
Brooded like obscene creatures on the rocks,
Or solely occupied the firmament,—
Where yet mine eyes could see no graceful flight
Of soaring Birds, nor were mine ears attuned
To hear the music of the groves expressed
In feathered harmony. And yet methought

* *Pterodactyls.*

† *Ramphorhynchus.*

I marvelled that 'mid all these leafy bowers
No callow nestlings chirped their gratitude,
Nor any dams solicitously sped
With frequent anxious gifts.

Then did I turn
Inquiringly to my Instructor, who
Met my regards with answering comment
Instant and swift :—" Yea, vainly hast thou sought
Amid these ancient reptile-haunted woods
Aught that betrays the joyous presence of
The wingéd commonwealth. Yet hast thou heard
Announced the great Creator's ordinance
Decreeing them existence ; but to thee
Is given to trace in all His mighty works
Order, and rule, and wise successive Law ;—
That such as He deems fit may occupy
The water, earth, or air, each after each,
In order of their being. For He made
Not all His creatures equal,—but the waves
Appointed He the nursery of Life,
Wherein His earliest Creation might
Disport themselves, nor use the solid Earth,
Nor breathe the subtle firmament ; for these
First, after insects, have the reptile brood

Inherited ; that their ignoble hordes
Might roam the untried land, and satiate
Their monstrous carcasses with brethren's blood ;
Or with unsightly wings attempt to scale
The yet imperfect air. But while their tribes
Still held dominion,—yet succeeding them,—
The lightsome bird, clothed with aërial down,
Soared heavenwards, and claimed for his domain
The blue transparent sky,—(which heretofore
Mere earthly shapes invaded ;)—and thus found
New uses for His firmament. For He
Created nought in vain, but each device
He bends to divers purposes, that each
Material scheme, unwasted, may subserve
Its foreordained uses. But anon
That thou hast vainly and too early sought,
Shall be disclosed in season, and complete
The fifth day's wondrous work.* Once more direct
Thy gaze to earth and air, and mark the event
Which consummates the record, and fulfils
The order of Creation, and its fixed
Predestinate succession."

* Gen

The sound of rustling pinions and the whirl
Of beating wings attracted my regard
To where, like shafted arrow from a bow,
Earth launched its earliest messenger,* to bear
Its story to the skies, and to proclaim
The coming tide of feathered minstrelsy
Which should link Earth with heaven, and convert
The honied incense of terrestrial flowers
To wild melodious music trilling through
The ethereal firmament. And as I watched
Its graceful flight, and rhythm of its wings,
Others companioned it, of plumage strange
And various, and forms diverse, and growth
Unequal,—first and earliest of all

The errant race of birds. And by the pools
And sedgy marshes saw I others † stand
Tall limbs motionless, with eager eyes
Not regard watching the active prey,
Through their native waters, to and fro,
Steadfast;—but more swift
As a lightning stroke
In their career, and changed

Pretaceous—and Scolopacida,

Their home of limpid waters for the dark
And silent dungeon of a living grave.

While yet I gazed with interest absorbed
On scenes of mystic wonderment, which seemed
Stranger than real, the fading vision paled,
And slowly vanished from my sense ; and left
Me musing o'er the impress which my soul
And memory had rescued from the closed
And darkened casements of my eyes, so late
Peopled with life and movement. But the vast
And gross unwieldy monsters which had ranged
Through dream-created forests, straight gave place
To harmless beasts of burden, and to flocks
Spotting the waking landscape ;—and the morn
Breaking around, closed the fifth imaged day *
Of retrospective labour, in which He,—
Who with wise patience had let ages glide
Uncounted by, while with unhasting steps
He suffered the maturing Universe
Under His guiding finger to arrive
At crowned perfection,—yet deigned to recount
His inexhaustible designs for Man's
Inheritance of knowledge.

* Genesis i. 23.

BOOK VI.

THE ARGUMENT.

The evening of the sixth day having arrived, the Archangel prepares the Seer for the sixth day's work. The Seer hears the command for the Earth to bring forth cattle, &c.—and sees a vision of the Earth at the commencement of the sixth day.—The first appearance of great cattle. Description of an extinct herd. These presently give place to the cattle of a later period; and huge monsters wander on the plains of the middle age of beasts, and forest monsters (apes) are seen climbing the woods. Aspect of the Earth in a later age, inhabited by cattle of the third age,—deer,—great sloths,—and cave-haunting beasts of prey, as tigers, bears, and hyænas.

THEN awhile

I meditated peacefully o'er all
The storied past, where each new picture filled
Its own appointed station, and each word
Uttered by the Archangel no less served
To fortify my memory, and unite
The disconnected fabric into one
Undying history ;—like the cunning work

Of some artificer, who skilfully
From particles minute, confusedly
Immingled, and diversely hued, constructs
An excellent and perfect harmony,
Delighting all beholders. And I knew
That one day only lacked in which to learn
Man's parentage, and how the finished work
Achieved its consummation in the birth
Of God's own image, destined to subdue
All pre-created beings ; and ere long
Impatience held my soul to be received
Once more into the cloudy canopy,
To feed itself from the same mystic source
On which it late had banqueted. Nor long
I waited, ere meseemed I was caught up
Above Earth's sphere, and all my faculties
Grew keener as the gloom of mystery
Spread round me like death's shadow, weaning me
From common outer things,—but brightening
My spiritual vision, to discern
The godlike presence at my side, whose light
Inspired me with its essence.

Then first he
Essayed to speak, and thus addressed himself

To his disciple :—" Now has dawned the last
Of all the promised line of visioned days
Pregnant with Nature's story ;—and anon
Shalt thou be witness how the horrid race
Of reptile monsters, which had haunted all
The seas and woods of the unfinished world,
Making them hideous, shall give place to new
And yet unfashioned great terrestrial beasts,—
Progenitors of the accustomed forms
Which people thine own earth, and of the flocks
And useful herds which pasture in thy vales
Beneath thy fostering care. Yet do I know
How that thy soul makes haste to recognize
Amid creative scenes thy fellows' form,—
And note 'mid what environing shall first
Thy human kind be cradled. But for this
So great event imports it that this sphere
Be yet anew remodelled, and adorned
With useful plants and fittest races, such
As may beseem the state and circumstance
Of reasoning denizens. First therefore hear
The brief commandment which shall furnish it
With beasts of nobler mould than those which late
O'er-ran its soil, and whose intelligence

In humble guise shall distantly foreshow
The intellect of Man."

Then did I hear
The searching voice of the Creator rend
The vault of Heaven, saying :—

"LET THE EARTH
BRING FORTH THE MOVING CREATURE THAT HATH LIFE,
AFTER HIS KIND,—CATTLE AND CREEPING THING,
AND EVERY BEAST OF EARTH AFTER HIS KIND
UPON THE EARTH!"*

And it was so :—for God
Made every beast of earth after his kind,—
Cattle, and every thing that creeps the Earth,
After his kind ;—and God saw it was Good ! †

Then straight mine eyes alighted on new scenes ‡
And I beheld a more familiar world
Than erst appeared ;—for in this imaged sphere
First did I mark the potent influence
Of changing seasons ; nor was all the Earth
Parched with a tropic heat, but cooling airs
And temperate breezes fanned the burning soil
Like breaths of zephyrs ; and the budding woods

* Genesis i. 24.

† Genesis i. 25.

‡ Tertiary Period.

Felt the refreshing showers which poured adown
The odorous air, and changed their sombre looks
Of antique gloom and melancholy shade
For the more cheerful friendly foliage
Of oak and birch, of alder and of elm,
Which told of younger forests. And I saw
A beauteous scene, where tall and stately trunks
Of fir and cypress, juniper and palm,
Decked every glade with sweet variety,
And lent a charm of novelty and change
To all the landscape. And the fields were clothed
With richest verdurous carpet of soft grass
Spangled with flowers innumerable, as bestrown.
With coloured worlds minute, inhabited
By tiny insect colonies,—o'er which
Hovered in air a humming busy throng
Of bees, and butterflies, and all the host
Of their ephemeral kin. Mid the winged swarm
Flew the bright plumaged birds, which fed themselves
Upon the teeming myriads, or skimmed
Like swallows o'er the tranquil pools ;—while some,
Yet more adventurous, pierced the crested waves
Of ocean in their never-ceasing quest
For scaly prey. And many a broad expanse

Of reedy* lake lay glistening in the sun,
Upon whose azure placid-rippling breast
Lay modest lilies offering their cups
Of fragrance to the balmy air,—and midst
Whose sedgy banks the wild resounding cries
Of flocks of fisher-birds* were heard, whose wings
Flapped heavily athwart the weedy marsh,
Filling their monstrous pouches with the spoils
Seized from the waste of waters.

But the plains†

And fertile meadows claimed my rapt regard,
Where in sweet pastures fed a motley herd
Of ponderous cattle grazing peacefully,
Each without hate to other, each intent
To crop the wholesome herbage, or to quench
His thirst in purling brooks, nor to molest
His harmless neighbour. Some there were‡ whose bulk,
Gross and unwieldy, bruised the yielding turf
On which they lay reposing, and oft wound
Their pliant trunks around the grassy tufts,
Or burrowing, sought sweet subterranean roots,
Their grateful provender. Others,§ more light
And agile, stretched forth their elongate necks,

* *Pelicanidæ*.

† Eocene Period.

‡ *Palæotherium*.

§ *Xiphodon*.

And, deer-like, tripped the sod in busy search
For aromatic herbs, on which they loved
To browse in freedom ;—while some,* overbold,
Quitted the flowery meadows for the bright
And cooling waters of the weed-filled lake,
Through which they steered, regardless of the shoals
Of swiftly-darting and affrighted fish,
To chew the thick and juicy stems upborne
By the supporting flood,—or dived beneath
The sparkling surface for the rooted food
Far in its miry depths. Nor these alone
Gave life to the bright landscape, but a host
Of creatures to whom all green things were meat,
Roved undisturbed, the great and small alike
Secure and harmless ;—for midst them I saw
No sharp-toothed savage stalking stealthily
With murderous jaws and blood-desiring eyes,—
Tiger or pard,—nor brute whose cruel fangs,
Armed with destruction swift and terrible,
Might decimate the unarmed citizens
Of all this tranquil scene.

But while I watched
These peaceful multitudes, their forms gave place†

* *Anoplotherium*.

† Miocene Period.

To vast unwieldy beasts* of mightier mould,
More gross than elephantine, whose sole tread
Snapped the impeding saplings and crushed down
The thick entwining bushes, like the soft
And slender reeds of some autumnal lake
Grown dry with summer heat. Yet these alike
Raged with no sanguinary fury,—drained
No warm life-streams to feed their wondrous bulk,—
But loved to crop the spoil of hanging boughs,
Or shear the grassy meadows, or disclose
The juicy roots and sustenance concealed
Deep in earth's nurturing bosom. And he,† who
Like to a monstrous giant overtopped
The earth's colossal citizens, was armed
With strange and potent weapons, by whose aid
And strength resistless the reluctant soil
Yielded its hidden treasures,—or anon
With snake-like trunk plucked out the drifting weeds
From off the swollen floods. Horrent and dire
Was he of aspect,—of a stature ne'er
Equalled 'mongst all the beasts of earth which roam
Through Afric's forests or through India's plains—
Fierce and invincible. Yet did he war

* *Mastodon.*† *Deinotherium.*

Not, save on humble plants and verdant boughs,
Nor waste his vast unconquerable might
In savage mutual slaughter ; but in peace
Consorted with his fellows, and each shared
The common gifts of Nature equally,
With measureless content.

And round him grazed
A scattered herd of gross and tuskèd beasts,
Which slowly ranged the river's banks, or cooled
Their vast unshapely limbs in miry pools,
And lazily regaled their appetites
With dainty roots which their far-reaching trunks
Might haply cull ;—while others basked at ease
In the luxurious sunshine, and relaxed
Their ponderous members in huge gambollings
Upon the marshy sward. Nor these alone,
Monstrous and terrible to look on, used
The fertile valleys, but a populous swarm
Of lesser creatures occupied the earth,
Intent to scour the refuse cast abroad
By their more wasteful brethren,—or to prey,
The little, strong, upon the lesser, weak ;
Like the great tyrant savages which claimed
Later dominion. And the sterile rocks

Counted their chosen dwellers ;—and the soil
Was drilled by busy miners, burrowing
At once their fortresses and storehouses,
Secure from every foe ;—and 'mid the green
O'erhanging foliage could be descried
The glancing fur of merry revellers
Sporting amid the boughs.

And I could mark

The wooded dells where creeping stems* entwined,
Like to the cordage of an argosy,
Hanging from lofty mast-like trunks, and swung
In tangled mazes 'thwart the leafy glades,
Barring access,—save to some woodland brute,
Whose form,† akin to human, hideous
In its foul semblance to humanity,
And teaching what were man, were man mere brute,
Climbed nimbly through the branches,—balancing
His hairy limbs with strange agility,—
Mopping and mowing with uncouth grimace,
And wrinkling with a vile distorted grin
His parchment visage ;—chattering the while
With inarticulate outcries, as he chased
His smaller flying brethren through the deep

* *Bambusiniites* and *Smilacites*.

† *Dryopithecus*.

And pathless wood recesses.

Once again

Came change* across the landscape, and I saw
Snow-laden mountains rise upon the earth
Diffusing temperate and cooling breath
O'er scenes late parched and tropic ;—and the woods
Were rich with wealth of alder and of beech,
Willow and birch and oak, and every tree
Which hung forth powdery tassels to the breeze ;
Mid whose bright foliage the sombre tints
Of yew and fir and pine stood darkly forth
In evergreen relief. And rivers ran
With smooth and broad expanse through fertile plains
Majestically ;—and amid the slime
Revelled the mailed and fierce Leviathan,†
While Behemoth‡ disported his huge bulk
In the slow-moving waters. And there roamed
The free and boundless pastures a new herd,
Amid which greeted mine accustomed eyes
Camel and horse and ox, and many a head
Of antlered deer,§ whose stately crests o'ertopped
The stature of their race, and bore aloft

* Pleiocene Period.

† Crocodiles

‡ Hippopotamus.

§ *Sivatherium*.

Great towering horns which sat like forest crowns
Upon their noble fronts. And with them marched
Vast shaggy elephants* with bristling manes
And upward circling tusks,—and doubly armed
Mighty rhinoceri, whose threatening snouts,
Grim with twin crescent weapons, could inspire
With terror and affright more monstrous beasts
Feeding defencelessly. For such there were †
Creeping with painful and laborious gait
And slow ungainly steps, and wandering
No farther than each forest giant rears
Its leafy maze from other,—innocent
Of aught more fell than to make each one yield
A bounteous banquet in such fashion as
Beseemed their sluggish nature. And they delved
Deep burrowing in earth's bowels with huge limbs
Massive and strong, whose disproportioned bulk
Denied mere progress, and condemned their life
To seeming slothful inactivity
And never-ending rest. Yet was each one
Most fitted for his destiny, nor lacked
Aught which might yield subsistence, or afford

* Mammoths (*Elephas primigenius*.)

† *Megatherium* and *Mylodon*, &c.

Full share of grateful joyance commonly
With all his fellows.

Meanwhile, in obscure
Cavernous dens, whose smooth and rocky floors,
Bestrewn with gory bones, were slippery
With new-shed blood, dwelt a ferocious crew,
Spreading a panic terror among all
The gentle herds, which started with affright,
What time the evening shadows gathered fast,
At sound of hungry roars and savage howls
Which waked the dreary echoes, and proclaimed
Some barbarous tiger issuing from his lair,
With flashing luminous eyeballs glaring o'er
The twilight landscape, in the deadly quest
Of some fresh victim to his cruel fangs
Scarce dried from their last blood. Striped were their skins
And sleek,—magnificent and merciless ;—
And with them tawny rough-maned lions couched,
More nobly dispositioned ;—and more fell
Than either, raged a monster terrible,*
Breathing destruction from his armed jaws,
Wherein, like trenchant sabres curved and keen,
Sat instruments of death ; and in his might

* *Machairodus.*

And agile strength he roamed the lord of all,
Moulded for slaughter, and insatiable
For quivering flesh and crimson tides of life
Fresh drawn and reeking. Huge ungainly bears*
Gristled and grim, low muttering fierce growls,
With blood-shot eyes awaited in black caves
Their victims' step ;—and vile hyænas† prowled
With coward jackals safely distanced from
Their mightier lords, watching with patient toil
If haply they should quit the mangled prey
But half devoured,—then claimed the carrion
With mutual snarls and wranglings, as beseemed
Their base ignoble natures.

* *Ursus spelæus.*† *Hyæna spelæa.*

BOOK VII.

THE ARGUMENT.

The Archangel prepares the Seer for the Creation of Man, and he hears the fiat issued for his creation, with the divine endowment of his race. He sees a vision of the earth at the earliest appearance of man, peopled by savage animals, amid which he discerns the first men. Their aspect described, their weapons, their watchfulness, their habitations, speech, contrivances, food, canoes, &c. The Seer expresses disappointment at the sight of Man in so barbarous a condition. The Archangel rebukes him, reminding him that these are but the pioneers of the human race. He describes the upward progress of Man towards civilization, the discovery of iron, how men unite together, and build habitations, till the ground, domesticate animals, and come to reverence the soil, accumulate lands and flocks, establish order and laws—thus arriving at the patriarchal times in which the Seer lived. The Archangel then draws a picture of what Man shall achieve in the lapse of 3000 years, describing his increased wants and his fertile resources. His merchandise, architecture, painting, sculpture, printing, locomotion, telegraphy, photography, ærostatics, the microscope, and astronomy. Such wonders, he adds, show Man's vast capabilities. The Seer expresses his surprise and elation; but the Archangel rebukes him, and points out how the improvement of his race will be marred by evil passions, such as produce War with all its attendant horrors. The Seer is humbled at the thought, and the morning breaks, which shews the sixth day's work ended.

SIGHTS like these

In swift succession riveted my sense

With all-absorbing interest, and filled
Awhile my spirit's longings, as I gazed
Upon the wondrous train of habitants
Which peopled all the woods and plains of earth
In long and slow succession ;—and awhile
My late divine aspirings yielded place
To curious musings on the teeming crowds
Of multitudinous life which thronged before
My vision like a pageant,—till the voice
Of the Archangel sounded solemnly,
And called my spirit back. Then did I thirst
Anew for long desired and coveted
Ultimate knowledge of Man's origin,
Cradled among the beasts : and thus I heard
Words of angelic wisdom :—

“ Lo, the work
Of the sixth day accomplished half, though yet
But scarce begun ;—for the same wondrous eve
And morning which have hitherto enframed
The living picture of brute multitudes
Of noble creatures, though unreasoning,
Shall, ere they fade, enclose the nobler work
Which consummates Creation, and enthrones
The infant reason that alone shall hold

Them all in mute subjection, and suffice
To shed a flood of lustre over all
The works of Nature, by reflecting some,
Perchance but few, pale beams of heavenly light
Derived from Nature's God. This is the crown
Of all the finished edifice,—and this
The keystone of the stately arch, which now
Awaits but the omnipotent command
For new and visible embodiment.
Prepare, O Man, with humble brow, to hear
The pregnant words which shall disclose the mien
Of thy ancestral sires, and their aspect;—
And gift thy race in imaged phantasy
With name and habitation, as erewhile
They lived, in long past ages, and o'ercame
With painful labour and unceasing toil
All Nature's forces, animate or dead,
To their own ultimate and future use
By virtue of their Intellect."

Then swept
A whirlwind voice adown the ærial vault,
Shaking earth's pillars,—and the mighty tones
Human-divine of our Original
Framed last creative words:—

“LET US MAKE MAN
AFTER OUR LIKENESS, IN OUR IMAGE ; AND
LET THEM HAVE DOMINATION O’ER THE FISH
THAT SWIM THE SEA, AND O’ER THE FOWL OF AIR,
AND O’ER THE CATTLE, AND O’ER ALL THE EARTH,
AND OVER EVERY CREEPING THING THAT CREEPS
UPON THE EARTH !”*

So God created Man
In His own image ;—in God’s image He
Created him, both male and female He
Created them. And God blessed them, and said,—
“Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth,
And conquer it ;—and have dominion o’er
The fishes of the sea, and o’er the fowl
Of air, and over every living thing
That moveth on the earth !”†

And God proclaimed ;—
“Behold to you have I given every herb
That beareth seed, which is upon the face
Of all the earth ; and every tree in which
There is a fruit which yieldeth seed,—to you
Shall they all be for meat. And to each beast
Which walks the earth, and every fowl of air,

* Genesis i. 26.

† Genesis i. 27, 28.

And every creeping thing which creeps the earth,
Wherein is life, to them have I given all
Green herbs for meat :''*— and it was so.

Then last

A vision fixed on mine astonished sense
Which filled me with amazement ;—and I saw
A landscape † such as meets my hourly gaze,
Whose various traits and sweet diversity
Of plain and mountain and broad-bosomed stream,
Meandering with tranquil circling flow
Through banks, anon adorned with herbs and flowers,
Or fringed with frowning rocks and darksome caves,—
Fit lurking place for monsters such as roamed
In scenes late memorized. And trees o'erhung
The purling river, rich in foliage
Not unfamiliar ; and expectantly
I looked for flocks and herds, and tents of men,
And features such as seized through daily use
My thoughts by bands of habit. But in vain
For such I sought,—no fleecy flocks were there
To nibble close the herbage,—cattle none,—
No herdsman issuing from his tented home
With pastoral crook or with more hurtful goad ;

* Genesis i. 29, 30.

† Quaternary Epoch, or Post Pleiocene.

But, 'stead thereof, were creatures such as ne'er
 I deemed Man looked upon ;—great Elephants*
 Vaster than common, all hirsute and maned,
 Browsed peacefully, or with their snaky trunks
 Sucked the refreshing stream ;—and antlered Deer
 Of mould gigantic† marched with stately step,
 And plummy wide-extended crests ;—and midst
 The tamer throng prowled huge ferocious Bears ‡
 Tenants of loathsome caves which reeked with blood,
 And poisoned all the balmy air around
 With noisome odours :—cunning too and fierce
 Lurked base Hyænas,§ whose demoniac din
 Frighted the night ;—and many a glistening eye
 Of diverse creatures wild might be discerned,—
 Some, like Rhinoceri,|| of bulk enorm,—
 While others 'mid the herb crept harmlessly,
 Or scaled the leafy woodlands.

And I paused

Unconsciously, and pondered if e'er Man
 Had lived amid such scenes, or could have dwelt
 Companioned by such monsters, since none such

* Mammoth (*Elephas primigenius*).

† Great Irish Elk (*Cervus megaceros*).

‡ Cave Bear (*Ursus spelæus*).

§ Cave Hyæna (*Hyæna spelæa*).

|| *Rhinoceros tichorhinus*.

Longer environed him ;—nor could I judge
What human valour could avail to cope
With desolating hordes as those which met
My restless gaze. Yet none the less I sought
Around for first-formed Man ; and my regards
Thus questioning, found response ; for from the shade
Of an umbrageous thicket slow emerged
A little band of Nature's warriors,
Unarmed by panoply of tusk or claw,
But doubly armoured by the infant force
Of Man's intelligence. Their aspect swart
And fierce beseemed the savage fellowship
Of evil beasts, 'gainst whose rude enmity
They needs should strive by such ingenious art
As might devise their yet imperfect skill
To bear them harmless ;—on their shoulders hung
Rough loose-robed skins won in the ardent chase
Of forest animals ;—their brawny arms
And shaggy breasts and rough and sinewy limbs,
Embrowned by suns and fanned by every breeze,
Were clogged by no encumbrance ;—and their barbed
And swarthy visages were pented o'er
With black and unkempt locks. Wild was their mien,
Uncultivate, and lacking all the grace

And polish of refined civility ;—
Yet did their forms erect, their rugged brows
And certain nobleness of port contrast
Strangely with other nature, and command
No less my admiration, as the first
Of God's new-minted image, than the fear
And dumb submission of inferior brutes,
Greater in stature and more excellent
In mere corporeal might. And in their hands
They wielded instruments of curious art,
Simple and rude, to which no metal lent,
Iron or brass or tin, its useful aid ;
But hewn with patient toil from living rocks
With implements, like them, rock-born ;—for yet
No cunning workman had discerned the use
Of earth-born elements, nor had essayed
To pluck from Nature's breast her buried board,
Or sought by fiery ordeal to compel
The solid ground to yield its treasury
Of rugged iron. For the age was yet
Uncouth and young,—unfertile in resource
And infantine in knowledge ;—in which men
Were unschooled children, ignorant of all
Earth held of wondrous use and ornament,—

Content alone to search for what sufficed
For food and drink, and for secure defence
'Gainst savage creatures scarce more barbarous
And wild than were themselves ;—an age of stone
In manners as in weapons,—earliest
And rudest lustrum of Man's history.

From out the firry thicket marched the small
Defenceless band ; and eagerly I watched,
And trembled lest some savage monster might
Assault their seeming weakness ;—for they tracked
The brake where even now ferocious bears
Had ravened for a prey,—but with relief
And thankfulness I marked them slink away
With muttered growls, and seek their filthy dens,
Gliding like cowering ghosts with baffled mien
Into the dark deep forest, at the view
Of Man united in companionship
For mutual defence. Then did my thoughts
Recal the Omnipotent behest, that Man
Should have them in dominion ; and no more
I feared the event, but waited hopefully
Foreshadowing consequences. And they marched
With wary steps to gain the arching roof

Of a protecting cavern, round whose mouth
Were raised rude battlements which steep escarped
A trench,—half Nature's work, half Man's,—o'er which
By wonted access straightly entering,
Their prisoned mates, who to domestic cares
And tended babes and weanlings ministered,
Gave eager welcoming. Then might be heard
The articulate babble of first human speech
Expressed and understood,—mellow and gruff
Of female and of male ; mid whose tumult
Piped the shrill treble of the beardless boy,
And artless lisp of infants.

And without,
Upon the threshold, lay a slaughtered deer,
Whose steaming venison would soon afford
A savoury repast ;—nor would be waste
Its sleek and hairy skin, sun-dried, and sewed
With fibrous threads plucked from the inmost stem
Of some tough vigorous plant, to be henceforth
A mantle of defence from summer's heat
And shield from winter's cold. And from its bones
They fashioned needful tools and instruments,
In art ungainly, clumsy of design,—
Yet which missed not their purpose,—to afford

Solace and modest consolation, such
As might beseem their few necessities,
And poverty of wants. Its tendons e'en
And puissant sinews found employ, affixed
To some elastic branch of supple yew,
Whose forcible rebound compelled the flight
Of piercing stone-tipped arrows, doomed to slay
The useful beasts of chase, or more malign
Pernicious beasts of prey.

Anon I saw

How the coast-dwellers sought the sandy shores,
And peered in weedy crannies and green clefts
Of slippery rocks, instant in busy search
For anchored lowly creatures, shell-enclosed,
Which served for meat when other nourishment,
More hardly earned, grew scarce,—or indolence
And slothful ease invented simpler modes
And methods less laborious to win
Their meed of daily food. And I descried
About their habitations piled-up hoards
Of emptied sea-born shells,* whose succulent
And juicy nourishment had been extraught

* The so-called kitchen-middens (*kjökken-mödden*) of Denmark, and *shell-mounds* of various localities.

To banish famine from their families.
Nor less did the broad sea accord a dole
From its abundance ; for a hardy crew,
Trusting their safety to the frail support
And hazard of a crazy bark, rough-hewn
From out a forest trunk, with flinty axe
Edged toilsomely, essayed to intercept
The finny spoil, nor failed they to entice
The rapid-darting shoal, or to acquire
Good store of nutrient fish.

Yet as I watched

The patient workman flaking with rude skill
The hard and ruthless flint,—or with its aid
Carving the shapeless club, and actively
Wielding these artless instruments to slay
The wary quarry with a dexterous hand,
Or bay their fiercer neighbours ;—when I gazed
On their unpolished and half-savage thrift
And sparing housewifery, and understood
Their frugal fare and household poverty,
And all they lacked of laws and institutes
And gentle nurture,—disappointment irked
My chafing soul, and vexed inquietude
Possessed my spirit ; for I had presumed,

With selfish pride and arrogance, to fix
The state and circumstance of primal Man
After mine own untaught imaginings
And ignorant ideal. And my thoughts,
Expressed in my regards, disturbed the form
And manner of my face, and drew on me
The eyes of him who read unerringly
Alike my soul and features,—and who thus
Addressed his rash disciple :—

“Dost thou well

To challenge the designs of the All-Wise,—
Or carp at projects which thou may'st but scan
With sight defective, while yet immature
And unimpressed with the perfecting seal
Of finished work ? For these scant companies
Shew but the forecast of the infancy
Of thy God-imaged race—which shall evolve
Diviner aptitude when Time has sped
A thousand generations from the stage
Of this enduring world. Yea, even yet
Thou recognizest wondrous qualities
Unshared by meaner natures,—attributes
Which brutes wot not of. Thou hast heard them speak
Language articulate, with tongues which use

Combined inflexions, and which harmonize
In sounds intelligent to all who use
The God-like gift of speech. And thou hast seen
The swelling buds of reasoning, which shall
Hereafter blossom into seedful flowers
Of abstract thought ;—thou hast discovered Man
Consorting for defence ; uniting force
And intellect for mutual benefit
And ultimate advantage, with design
Incapable by brutes ;—for Man alone
Has power to league, and to communicate
His knowledge to his fellow, and to found
His own increase on the ancestral dole.

Now shalt thou learn from my instructing lips
How Man shall climb from infantile estate
To what thou ne'er hast dreamed. For after these
First generations, the free-handed Earth
Yielded its secret store of metal,—first
Of ever-useful iron, by whose aid
In time to come shall Man work miracles,—
Therewith to forge the magic key which opes
Civilization's portals, and the gates
Of formulated polity. Then soon

The ties of blood and kindred more prevailed
To link together families in bands
Of mutual affection, in such wise
As untamed savage natures could nor feel
Nor fitly comprehend. In concert, such
Constructed cunning dwellings on the strand
Of outspread waters, and o'erhung the meres
With habitations artfully devised
With rough-hewn and unpolished carpentry,
Surmounting the protecting lake,* in which
They found no less a citadel from foes
Than an exhaustless storehouse furnished forth
From out its teeming plenty. Nor long time
Sufficed to teach mankind to vanquish earth
To his behests, and cause the docile soil
To nurse the useful herbs and plants and trees
Which harbour friendly nourishment ;—to till
The grimy precious ground, endowed with all
The chemic opulence which can transform
Its mire to pastures and its dust to gold.
Nor lacked they the domestic gifts of Heaven,
The faithful dog, and woolly flocks, and herds
Of cattle,—beasts of burden and of draught,—

* See the Lake-dwellings of Switzerland.

Which for the dole of daily food and drink
And masterful protection 'gainst the fierce
Ensanguined hordes around, were fain to yield
Their grateful living service ; and e'en some
Their nutrient carcasses, to chase afar
Famine and meagre hunger from the tents
Of their benign defenders. Then obtained
The Earth new value and a fresh import ;—
No more a simple resting-place for feet
Which wandered aimlessly, or solely bent
On snaring native creatures which erewhile
Inherited its surface,—but a pledge
From Heaven, to be restored in the sweet scents
Of flowers and fruits, and all the goodly show
Of cultured herbs and roots which yield reward
And solace to mankind for all his toil,
Whereby he wins a seasonal increase
From Nature's bounteous store.

Henceforth the land
Was known a rich possession, coveted
As wealth's secure foundation, and the source
Of unexampled power which should raise
Man o'er his fellows, and distinguish 'twixt
The opulent and poor ;—an influence

For evil or for good, as each might use
The gifts of Fortune. And as each one shared
His pasturage or tillage by the tale
Of flocks or herds or numerous progeny
Wherewith he stood endowed,—so each assumed
An interest of ownership, to keep
Unscathed his landmarks, and to dwell secure
Within the settled boundaries of his
Confirmed domain. For each man loves his own ;
And all men with no base attachment cling
To the ancestral soil, which furnished them
With home, with country, and with nutriture .

Hence laws and order, and communities
Of household kindred, dwelling in repose
Private and undisturbed, yet publicly
Amid the general people ;—bearing each
Its burden of domestic cares, and each
In sweet seclusion living peacefully,
Lapped in content, possessing lands and flocks,
And unmolested by his neighbour's greed
Or unjust violence. And each one looked
Forth for assured protection, and combined
With all his neighbouring fellows to accord

The even justice and strict privilege
Of which himself had need. For every man
Was sharer of the common good, and all
In their degree might profit equally
By principles of stablished government
All sheltering impartially.

Such then
Is thine own pastoral estate, in which
Thou liv'st as did thy forefathers, enriched
With all the blessings of prosperity
In ample measure, and in usual peace ;—
And such the natural original
Of simplest, earliest Society,
Of which thyself art member, and thy peers
No less with thee ;—dwellers in tented homes,
Tilling the grateful earth, and garnering
The products of thy serviceable toil,
Increasing sheep and oxen, gathering
Fresh troops of camels, asses, and of goats,
To crop thy verdant pastures, and afford
Milk, meat, and means of draught to all the tribe
O'er which thou rul'st a patriarch,—and which,
Raises its honouring regards to thee,
As to its firm yet gentle arbiter,

And mild, benevolent, right-trusty friend,—
Father and ruler both conjoined in one.

Now shall thy soul prophetic overleap
The mighty lapse of thrice a thousand years ;—
Each decade laden with a history
Of nascent nations and of tottering thrones,—
Each century transferring sovereignty
From East to West,—from Southern lands to North,—
Changing its gods, its customs, and its race,
In limitless succession. Nor shalt thou
Have need to trace the wondrous vestiges
Of barbarous splendour, or of civil states,
Or long lost polities, which strew the track
Of levelling Time ;—nor view the mouldering dust
Of ruined cities which in turn were thronged
With restless crowds, mid whom serenely moved
The rare intelligence of Orator,
Statesman, or Poet, or Discoverer,
Whose precious genius impelled thy race
Onwards, as with a mighty lever,—each
Exalting Man upon a nobler throne
Than that he graced before.

But in that day

Shall populous countries teem with busy hands
Of skilful artisans, who shall contrive
To fabricate in metal, and in stone,
And wood, and thousand various substances
To thee yet strangers, marvels of design
Subserving to luxurious ornament,
Or wonted daily use ;—for in that time
Shall thy few simple wants be multiplied
Ten thousand-fold ; and each one shall depend
For food apparel and equipment on
Thousand artificers, and traffickers
In numerous merchandry, whose argosies
Have traversed orient and occident
And lands thou wot'st not of. And they shall build
Magnific palaces and temples, such
As thou may'st see but in inspired dreams,
Whose marble traceries and fretted roofs
Were worthy angels' fingers ; and whose domes
And gilded pinnacles shall pierce the skies,
Making their builders pigmies,—and enshrine
Noble imaginings in deathless work
Of hewn and shapely stone. And they shall spread
With dexterous art and magic mimicry
Nature's own colours in enchanted tints

Which ravish all beholders ;—and create
From out a fragment of the formless rock
Gained from the rugged quarry, miracles
Of tender loveliness, embodying
Divinest models of rich symmetry
Which shall outlast all Time. And every man
Shall read the thoughts of other, and shall learn
All that is worthy in experience
And high in aspiration, from the scroll
Which, multiplied ingeniously, shall lie
At his right hand ;—for all men shall possess
Embodied wisdom of philosophers
And lore of sages, who, like beacon-fires,
Have thrown their sparkling beams athwart the path
Which leads mankind to Immortality.
And in that day shall even Time and Space,
Material foes, be vanquished ; and no more
Shall men be satisfied to mete the Earth
With rapid stride of swiftest labouring steed,
Or fleeter dromedary,—but shall learn
To subject Nature's might to their employ,
And emulate the windy messengers
Of whistling hurricanes,—borne on the wings
Of fire-begotten vapour, tamed to speed

Courser, fierce-snorting with hot breath, encased
In ribs of triple steel. And they shall tear
The sleeping lightning from its stern repose,
And bind it in soft fetters, which it may
Not wrench apart with all its potency,—
But must perforce surrender helplessly,
As man's most subtle slave and courier,
To minister to his behests, and bear
His instant errands to far distant isles
And uttermost strange lands. Nay, e'en the vast
And gorgeous orb which feeds inferior globes
With life and light, shall be constrained to lend
Its golden shafts, which men shall rudely seize
In mid career to feed their phantasy ;—
And as with limner's brush to counterfeit
Nature's presentments, and unerringly
Arrest the fleeting sunbeam in its course,
To fix its tender and ethereal ray
In lights and shades of beauty. And they shall
Rival with birds possession of the skies,
And climb the ærial firmament in ships
Buoyant and lightsome, whose swift silent flight
May scale the heavens, rivalling the tops
Of high star-pointing mountains. And men's eyes

Shall scrutinize alike the small and great,—
Peer into microcosms, and explore
The tiniest created speck which scarce
Greets the unaided vision, and descry
Wonders of curious mechanics, shut
In narrowest confines ;—contrivances
Of peerless skill and of unequalled art,
Framed by divinest wisdom to subserve
The subtle processes of Life. Nor less
Shall they interrogate the Universe,—
Sound the most distant Heavens, and shall scan
Creation's outposts,—and e'en seek to learn
The watchword of the starry sentinels
Which keep their solemn guard in the abyss
Of farthest space ;—and they shall prophesy
The future mazes of the circling host,
And when the sun shall darken, and the moon
Withdraw her silvery light ; and shall forecast
The appointed seasons for the wandering fires
Whose horrent aspect and whose threatening mien
Fill all men with amazement.—Yea, shall they
Pierce mountains, bridge the floods, and walk the deep,
Unite the neighbouring oceans, and defy
The tempest's fury and the vehemence

Of angry waves, illumine the ocean's breast,
And guide their navies through the trackless seas
By day or night with like security.

Such are the trophies which thy race shall win
In times to come ; and such shall testify
Thy high and God-descended lineage
To future wondering generations ; each
In turn contemplating with new surprise
Its latest progress,—and each grown more bold
To penetrate Creation's mysteries,
And draw fresh lessons from a virgin page
Of Nature's wordless book."

Amazed I heard

Thus pourtrayed the illustrious record
Of man's achievements ; and no more the pangs
Of disappointment cankered my regard,
But joy and peace and hope within me shed
A genial influence ; and I craved to know
More of man's future,—yet meseemed that this
Angelic pæan o'er posterity
Raised men to near equality with Gods,
Nor left aught more to seek. But my divine
And capable Instructor frowningly

Lowered his noble brow, and, with a voice
In which my inmost being felt the tones
Of righteous indignation, turned aside
My gathering thoughts :—

“Too rashly hast thou judged
Needing correction ;—for the sooth to tell,
These triumphs of thy kind which I have hymned,
Though glorious verities, stand not alone,
Untarnished by ignoble violence
And hellish lawlessness ;—and thou must learn
To qualify thy joys, and moderate
Thy bright anticipations by the tale
Of evil deeds, which, like a ponderous chain,
Shall trammel their aspirings, and unfit
Their souls for high communion. For know,
That also in that time shall men devise
Dread instruments of death, to slay therewith
Their fellow men, and use infernal skill
In fell contrivances, whose mortal aim,
Avowed and unconcealed, is murderous,
And mere malign destruction ; savagely
To mutilate and scatter limb from limb,—
To spill men’s blood, and to put out the life
They did not, cannot give ;—yea, to deface

God's image, and disfigure the divine
Stamp of His likeness, sign and seal alike
Of His near kinship. Even thus shall men,
Mad with the fury of ambition, blind
With lust of power and with thirst for blood,
Goad on their fellows to such slaughterous acts
As make wives widows, children fatherless,
Desolate families, and ruin homes,
Depopulate whole nations, and deprive
The fields of tillage, and the arts of peace
Of their contented labourers, to fall
Like unripe sheaves in wasted sacrifice
Before a phantom glory,—barely clutched
By one red hand scarce dried, then ruthlessly
Stolen by one still reeking. And men shall
Lavish their wealth on murder, but begrudge
A tithe for peaceful progress, and the means
Of useful industry, and the behoof
Of intellectual advancement. Thus
Shall they, to their own shame and folly, clog
The march of the perfectible estate
To which man ever tends ;—and thus shall ill
E'er mix with good below, until the time
When earthly things are ended, and a new

And spiritual kingdom shall restrain
Alike men's rage and the brute violence
Of senseless beasts,—alike the vehemence
Of human war and elemental strife.”

Then, as I listened with a saddened mind
In which Hope shone serene, like a sweet gem
Brighting a darksome cavern, first my sight
Missed the departed vision, wherein Man
Late held chief place, in earliest employ
And rudest fortune pictured ;—and I knew
The sixth day's work fulfilled, and finally
Creation perfected, and in my dreams
Fully rehearsed. And as the latest tones
Of the Archangel, like a solemn bell,
Half mournful, yet half cheering, died away
In whispers through my downcast soul, the morn
Burst through the murky cloud, and lighted me
Again to earth, there newly to display
Man working out his destiny with slow
And measured steadfastness and constancy,
After the ordinance wherewith he holds
The tenure of his being.

BOOK VIII.



THE ARGUMENT.

The saddened Seer seeks for consolation, and the Archangel resumes, and announces God's Rest on the seventh day—a Rest which consists in the providential contemplation of his achieved works. No further great changes will be necessary in the world, for Man completed the design of Creation. The seventh day thus represents the Dispensation of the Present. The reign of Law in the physical and in the spiritual world. The Seer acknowledges its justice, and makes a final appeal for some insight into the future condition of the world, and of Man. The Archangel responding, foretells the duration and purpose of the material world, and prophesies the regeneration of Man ; after which, bidding the Seer farewell, he ascends to Heaven, amid celestial songs of praise from Archangels, Seraphs, Angels, and Cherubim—and the Seer returns to his place to teach the Revelation to his fellow-men.

AND yet methought

I felt a void within me,—yearning yet
For comfort and encouragement, as though
The Universe achieved could not suffice
To give my spirit peace ;—and I implored
The Presence that so long had hovered near
Anew to counsel me. Nor did he long

Withhold the succour of his gracious speech
And consolation of his parable,—
But, beaming radiantly, took up the word :—

“Thus were the Heavens finished, and the Earth,
And all the host of them,* at His command ;
And God saw everything that He had made,
And it was Very Good.† For in six days
Did He rehearse His deeds, and on the seventh
God ended all His work which He had made,
And rested from His labour. Yea, hath God
Blesséd the seventh day, and sanctified
The day of His repose ;—for on that day
He rested from His work which He had made,
And His creative toil ‡ Yet not as man
Doth He repose Himself,—as one who feels
Corporeal pain or mental weariness,
Or needs refreshing slumber to restore
The exhausted faculties impaired by force
Of long continued effort. For the Lord
Sleeps not nor slumbers, and His Spirit knows
Not man’s infirmities, save to pity them
And shew compassion on them.

* Genesis ii. 1.

† Genesis i. 31.

‡ Genesis ii. 2, 3.

But His Rest
Is the Divine Contemplative Repose
Of tranquil meditation,—pondering
With calm ineffable serenity
O'er the deep mysteries of all His works
And watching, with unutterable peace
And patience inexpressible, the springs
And operations of the principles
His wisdom has embodied in the laws
Of His transcendent Universe. For when
The great Artificer had ended all
His matchless scheme, and set His own impress
On the achieved Creation, henceforth nought
Might more disturb the Order of the World
With new-born wants or unconsidered needs,
Subverting the established Ordinance
And fixed estate of Nature. For the earth,
And outer worlds no less, though anciently
Rude and imperfect, ever struggling on
To reach their late maturity, have long
Fulfilled their destined purposes ;—and all
The living freight which animates this ball
Touched its vivific culmination when
Thou, Man, walk'dst in their midst ;—nor afterward

Needed the earth new creatures, nor the world
Anew to be transformed, nor outwardly
In figuration or in surface changed,
To minister to races unforeseen
By His vast comprehensive Providence.
Hence is the Age of Preparation past,
In which, as in six periods, He worked
With ever-youthful vigour in His great
Constructive plan ; nor wavered in His grave
And sedulous employ ;—and now is born
The season of Fruition, wherein He
Delights in contemplation, and the view
Of all His acts fulfilling the design
And ends He had appointed.

Such is then

The Dispensation of the Present,—such
The station and condition of the Time
In which thou livest,—and the coming Age
Of Man's development. For still henceforth
Shall God rest from creating, and shall watch
The evolution of His matchless schemes
And wise far-seeing projects, with delight
Such as an Artist feels in the review
Of some strange peerless mechanism, moved

By myriad supple springs, depending each
On the free action and just poise enjoyed
By every delicate nice-fitting part
Of the well-balanced whole.

Now therefore is
The Universe at rest no less than God :—
For God is Nature ; and the Universe
Is His material exponent,—Man
His spiritual commentary :—He
Holds fast the bridle of the elements,
And of His will disposes the events
Which sum up human history. All things He
Directs and supervises,—nor permits
Aught contrary to the eternal rule,
Inalterable and unchangeable,
Which he has stamped on all things. For no less
Is His supernal character expressed
In systematic order, and precise
Undeviating method ;—and in all
His noble deeds, His genius sublime
Finds issue in inviolable Law
Which binds all Nature subject,—nor allows
E'en the least variant jot ; but like effect
Unerringly produces from like cause,

And out of equal combined influence
Evolves like consequence.

Yea, and as He
Impressed His laws on the submissive world
Of senseless matter, which it may not choose
But must obey,—e'en with like meaning He
Has set its bounds on spirit ; and the thoughts
And mind of man, so seeming unrestrained
And free as ambient air, are subjugate
To the Eternal Spirit that inbreathed
Their subtle essence. For the Lord of All
Is excellent in goodness, and the Fount
Of Righteousness, of Justice, and of Truth ;
Nor can aught false or vicious emanate
From the unsullied spring whence Godliness,
And all that is Divine, originates.
Therefore, O Man, if in thy sentient soul
Aught vile or base is harboured, know that there
Is God's Law broken, and His ordinance,
Which cannot change, is slighted and contemned
To thy sure chastisement. For wheresoe'er
Is choice accorded, and the settled Law
Through wilfulness distort or broken, nought
May straight the crooked statute, or repair

The violated ordinance, save exact
And ample sacrifice,—or punishment
Sharp and distressful, which may expiate
Its outraged Majesty, and satisfy,—
Not vengeance,—but the precious quality
Inherent in the Universe.”

He ceased :—

And fixed on me his luminous regard,
Piercing my inmost soul, as though he sought
Worthy response therein to his discourse,
Proclaiming the Divinity of Law
And sovereignty of Order. And mine eyes
Fell timidly before him, and I quailed
Beneath his burning glance, as one who hears
Sentence pronounced in judgment ; yet no less
Did my instructed spirit recognize
The blameless justice of his argument,
And his reproachless reasoning.

Then last,—

For I bethought me that the end was nigh,—
I found new courage to make further quest
If I might haply from his lips learn aught,
Ere they were sealed for ever, of the world's
Long future history ; how, in times to come,—

Which veiled their ghostly shadows in the dim
Mysterious twilight of eternity,
As the beginning lost its estimate
Of centuries in the hoar days of eld,—
The aged earth, long past its blooming prime,
Should wear its senile mantle ;—and I prayed
My grave Instructor if his ambassage
Aught might bequeath of bright prophetic fire
Which should illume the aspect of the world
Far in futurity ;—if it should endure,
Or haply languish ;—if its citizens
Should dwell in peace thereon, and be endued
With powers angelic,—(for I dared hold faith
In Man's perpetual advancement,)—or,
If that his race perchance should be transferred
To some new theatre, more worthily
Fitting his ripened faculties,—whereon
Soul should o'ermaster matter, and, unchained
From gross corporeal fetters, he should rise
Far above sensual vision, and discern
With clear insight more near akin to God
Than to mere human reasoning.

Then he
With bright illumined visage, seeming rapt,

Bard-like, in mystical futurity,
In attitude of blessing thus took up
His glorious epilogue :—" One shall endure,
Though His material works should perish ;—One
Shall be unchanged, though the far-reaching Heaven
Of gleaming stars, and the firm-founded Earth
Should wax old as a garment, or be changed
Like to a vesture. Yet imagine not
Fondly and vainly that the solid globe
Shall particle by particle decay
And crumble into nothingness, or that
The rocks and everlasting hills, which once
Were not, shall yet again have been and fled
Like an extinguished taper ;—nor conceive
That the exhaustless sea's component drops,
Distilled in bygone æons, shall return
In future ages to new uses :—but
Learn from my truthful and instructed lips
That the foundations of the solid earth,
Laid by Jehovah, shall not be removed
For ever ;*—for one generation shall
Vanish away,—another shall succeed,—
Yet shall this stable sublunary world

* Psalm civ. 5.

Abide for ever,*—ever to supply
Peoples and tongues and nations to exalt
His glorious praises through Eternity.
For the designs of the Omnipotent
Are Infinite, and His vast Providence
Eternal,—limitless by space or Time ;—
And deem not falsely that this stablished Earth
Whose struggling slow-protracted youth thou hast
Marked with thy spirit sight,—whose scarce mature
And ripened form (o'er which the ceaseless round
Of tardy ages incubated) thou dost now
Inherit with thy race,—shall but outlast
The brief span of a few score centuries,
Then sink in swift decay. Not thus is His
Divinest Order vindicated,—nor
Would He thus shew forth His Infinity
Of Love and Wisdom ; for His glorious Heaven
Of countless mansions for the just and good
Is, like Him, infinite ;—nor might its confines
Alone be peopled, filled, or satisfied
With the poor pittance of humanity
So briefly nourished,—nor can ever be
Furnished, complete, and perfect, were this ball,

* Ecclesiastes i. 4.

Its partial nursery, untimely void.

But in thy speculating eyes I see
Afresh inquiry of MAN'S destiny
In this material dwelling,—nor may I
Deny thy wish. Hear then my testament ;—
For with prophetic vision I behold
New Heavens, and a New Earth, whereon doth dwell
Righteousness in divinest fellowship
With Truth and Peace ; and on its purified
Regenerated face see I Mankind
Victorious over evil, conquering sin,
And dwelling with their Maker,—Who shall be
Their God, and they His people,—Who shall wipe
All tears from off their faces. And there shall
Be no more sorrow, no more sighs, nor pain
For ever,—nor the fear of death,—for all
The former things shall then have passed away,
And He that sits upon the throne hath said,
'Lo ! I make all things new !' ”*

Then did he pause

A breathing space, and glanced benignly down
To where I stood regarding him with gaze

* Revelation xxi. 4, 5.

Half worshipping,—and drinking his accents
With eagerness, as of some precious draught
From a life-giving fount, whose priceless drops
Gain tenfold power as their swift-lessening sum
In brief must vanish. Even thus I hung
Upon his parting words, which gave me strength
To bear the surcease of his spirit voice,
Which for a space had thrilled my inmost soul
Like heavenly minstrelsy. Then did he wave
His uplift hand with sovereign courtesy,
And bending on me an aspect of love,
Uttered his final greeting :—“ Hail ! blest man,
Depositary of God’s oracles,—
Chosen before all ! Hail ! mortal,—and farewell ! ”
And ere the tones had ceased to vibrate through
The pure surrounding æther, the divine
Majestic form passed from my spirit’s sight
Like a dissolving dream ; and I might hear
The gentle rustle of a myriad wings,—
Angels’ and seraphs’, which accompanied
Their lord to minister around the throne
Whereon once more with princely attributes
The great Archangel sat.

And as they rose

From Earth to Heaven, a choral harmony
Of praise and worship filled with ecstasy
My quickened spirit ;—and methought they sung :—

ARCHANGELS.—“ Hail ! great Ambassador !
Sent of Jehovah ;
Chiefest of envoys,—
First of Archangels,—
Returning in honour
To thy azure throne,
Whereon thou dispensest
The justice of Heaven !
Seraphs attend thee,—
Cherubim herald thee,—
Legions of angels
Conduct thee on high,—
Where the Ancient One sits
In contemplative Rest,
Awaiting his servant
To render account
Of his errand accomplished
And mission fulfilled.”

SERAPHS.—“ The Most Highest spake,—

And darkness dissolved,
And Chaos submitted
To Order and Law.
Light heard His voice
And illumined the waste,
Arousing from apathy
Life's primal germs.
The waters He parted
By word of His might,
And curtained the firmament
Far o'er the deep.
The desert of Ocean
Obeyed His command,
And wore on its bosom
Broad lands and islets
Clad with rich verdure,—
Rank herb and grass,
And unwitnessed forests
Of green silent shade.
Anon gorgeous sunlight
And moon's ghostly sheen
Pierced through the cloudy bars,
Gladding all creatures :—
For old Ocean travailed,

Bringing forth monsters,
Sea and land teeming
With shapes huge and grim ;
And bright feathered gems
The limpid air winged,
With wild untaught music
Praising their Maker.
At His mighty word
The solid ground shook
With huge tread of elephants
And forest beasts ;
Alike wood and herb
With citizens peopled,
The strong and the feeble
Each living content.
And last the Ineffable,
Deeming imperfect
His palace of miracles
Lacking Intelligence,
Framed His own image,
Reasoning Man,—
On Earth His vice-gerent
Learned in His mysteries ;—
In Heaven hereafter

To share His dominion,
Becoming allies
Of the angelic legions."

ANGELS.—"Achieved and completed,
Finished and perfected,—
Lo ! where the wondrous Earth
Courses along !
Fires have purified
Waters have laved,
Ages have cradled
Its rude infancy ;—
Cycles uncounted
Rolled o'er its youth,
And unwearied centuries
Ere it matured
Through Chaos and riot
To Order and Rest,—
Through anguish and turmoil
To fair smiling Peace :
Furnished with marvels,—
Stored with devices,—
Teeming with beauty,—
Material Heaven !

The Lord of Eternity
Lavished His Time—
The divine Master-BUILDER
Expended His skill—
The Fount of all Wisdom
Enriched it with good—
The Soul of the Universe
Breathed on it Life :—
Life in the ocean,
Life in dark forests,
Life in the firmament,
Life in the soil,—
Life in the greatest,
Life in the smallest,
Life without reasoning,
Life joined with soul :—
Beings immortal,
Brothers of Angels,
Welcome partakers
And sharers of all
The blessings of Paradise,—
Spiritual Heaven ! ”

CHERUBIM.—“ Therefore thou fiery mist,

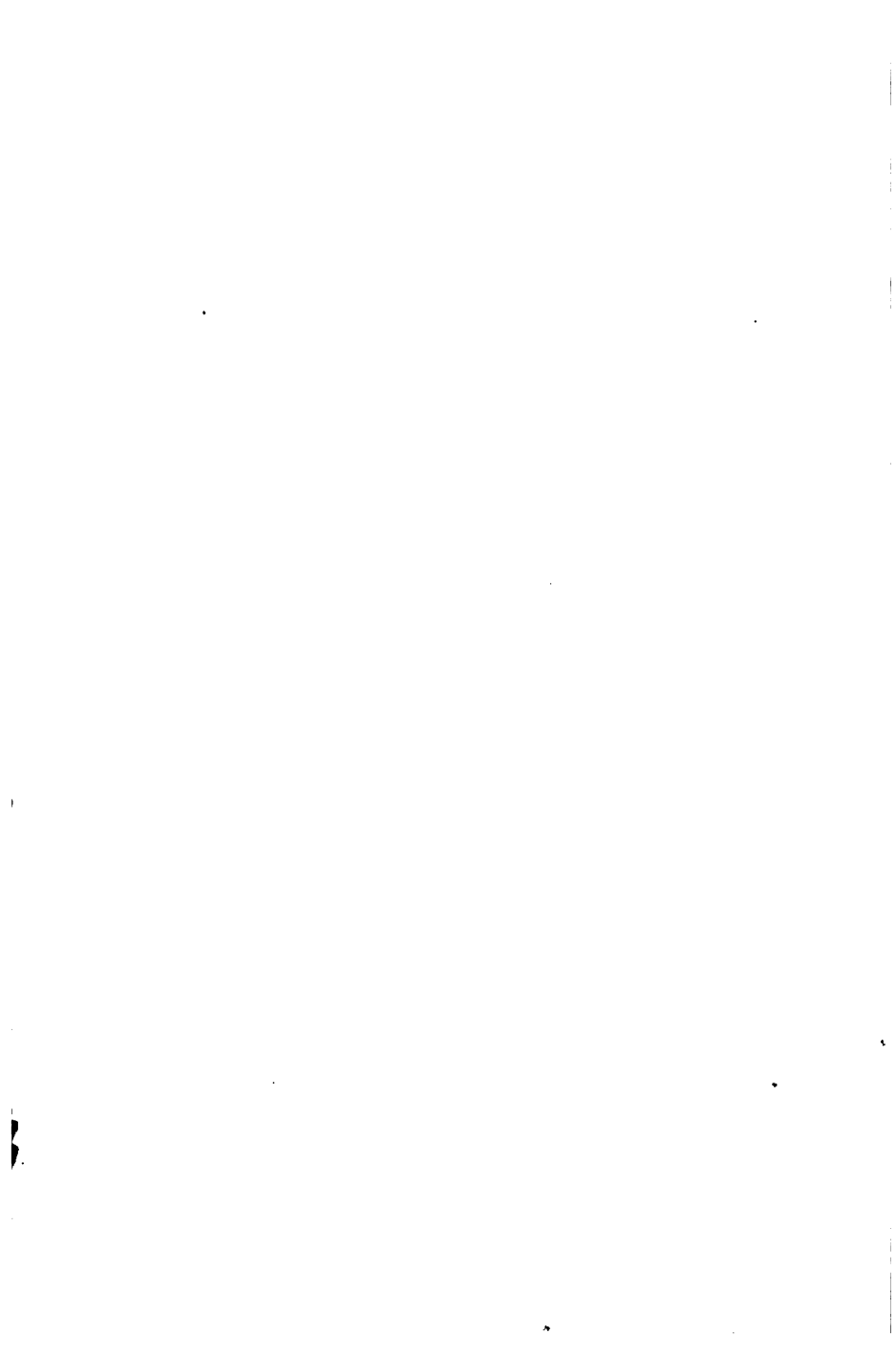
Magnify thy Maker !
Heat and cold and water,
Praise thy great Creator !
Lightnings and deep thunders,
Obey His sovereign nod !
Light, no less than darkness,
Recognize thy God !
Seas and boundless firmament,
Speak His Infinity !
Lands and sea-girt islands,
Tell His Sublimity !
Mountains and all high hills,
Exalt His power and might !
Fruit-trees and all green herbs,
Proclaim Him Source of Light !
Brooks and running rivers,
Spring of all Good, adore Him !
Ye lordly Sun and Moon,
Veil yourselves before Him !
Ye myriad host of stars,
Tremble as ye shine !
Great whales of ocean, bless
His beneficence divine !
Great Earth-born monsters, all

To Him thank-offerings bring !
Ye feathered minstrels, tune
Hymned glory to your King !
Ye huge four-footed beasts,
Trumpet loud His fame !
Ye smaller creeping creatures,
Whisper His dread Name !
And Man ! fall low before Him,
And humbled in the dust
Cry, Holy ! Holy ! Holy !
That was, and is, and even
Eternally shall be
Lord over all the Earth—
Sole Majesty of Heaven !”

Then, as the lessening tones
Dying in harp-like whispers, thrilled my spirit
With sympathetic praises, I awoke
From the blest trance, stepping from Heaven to Earth,
And musingly descended from the crest
Of the far mountain solitude ; and bore
My pregnant soul, burthened with images
Of deeds divine and glorious, to where
Abode my fellow men,—there to unfold

The wondrous tale, and teach them to adore
God their Creator with more perfectness
And knowledge than erenow ;—and worthily
To live in humble gratitude and love
To Him who founded Heaven, and Earth, and Sea,
Who fashioned living Nature, and who taught
His reasoning Vice-gerent to proclaim—
“ HE HATH DONE ALL THINGS WELL ! ”

THE END.



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